

SMITH'S

MARCH, 1914

MAGAZINE

15 CENTS



NOVELETTE BY GRACE MARGARET GALLAHER

SHORT STORIES BY GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE, MARION SHORT, EUGENE WOOD, R. O'GRADY,
RALPH BERGENGREN VIRGINIA MIDDLETON ALMA MARTIN ESTABROOK AND OTHERS



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that they couldn't smoke a pipe.
They read and believed and
struck jimmy pipe joy,
speedolike, the first crack
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the national joy smoke

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turn in the fresh air and realize that
*no other tobacco can be made like
Prince Albert!*

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Chief Joseph
Nez Perce

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as fragrant and
as bully bang-
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abroad—he can
get Prince Al-
bert. Tippy red
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red tins, 10c;
also pound and
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 6

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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"No, what is it?"

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Look for
the spear



Chew it after every meal

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 18

MARCH, 1914

NUMBER 6

A Singer of Songs

By Grace Margaret Callaher

Author of "Her Dwelling Place," "Debts," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

ALL up the valley flowed the clear green light of early spring. A slow wind, moistly aromatic with the bitter-sweet tang of wild things opening into bloom, searched with gentle, persistent fingers in and out among the trees and grasses for any soul of the earth world not yet quickened to birth. This wind blew up from the mouth of the valley below, from the wide plains beyond, from the great ocean a thousand miles away, and mingled in its coming the mystery of the spring, which is the mystery of renaissance, with that older mystery of the sea, which is that of eternity itself. The smile of the sun, still some width above the rim of the world, the whisper of the wind, the song of the river, raising a chant of joy from its unseen throat, all lured one out on the trail of rapture, careless if the quest were long, or if the seeker must often sleep at the "Inn of the Silver Moon."

Yet for all the color and scent and sound in the world without, Althea Penton scrubbed away on her knees on her kitchen floor, her bucket of suds beside her, a bar of soap in one hand, a brush in the other. What if it were the quick o' the year? Was this not Saturday, and therefore the day proper for a thoroughly cleaned house? She drugged at the uneven logs and clay-daubed cracks as relentlessly as once

upon a time she had polished board floors. The floor damp and smelling of soap, up she jumped and began on the pine tables and other furniture of the room. She polished off the heavy old stove, washed out her implements, and stowed them away out of sight. She stood in the center of her battlefield, a general victorious in the fight of cleanly living.

"We're clean as a whistle," the pride of the workman mounting up in her voice through the weariness of the flesh. "If I could only manage so as we'd stay it, but this time a week we'll be a regular hurrah's nest."

She twisted a small green-and-red plaid shawl around her shoulders, hung a milk pail on either arm, whistled to the dogs stretched in the open doorway, and started out into the sunshine.

Her house was a two-roomed log cabin, with a loft and a lean-to, yet it was fenced in on a tiny grassplot by a prim paling, characteristic of an older type of householders, and a flower-bordered path marched steadily down to the gate. Althea loved every picket in that fence, for her hands had hewed—one might say hacked—they out and forced them deep into the earth. The plants, too, were the reward of tireless care. Thus fenced and flower-wreathed, the cabin held for her a look of home in this vast, lonely land where

not even the Bible seemed to count. The river poured itself out from a crack in the mountains, rushing headlong down the valley till it passed out of it through another gap. Each side of its blue trail spread the green of smooth prairies; beyond loomed the mountains, dark with pine forests, cloud-misted at their crests. The small, stanch cabin was the only sign of man.

Althea walked fast—she seemed always flying from some duty hot on her heels—up along the river. Small bright herbs twinkled out from the mosses; the river flickered rainbows in the sun; a wild bird whistled enchantingly from a tree. She heeded never a one of these pretties, not dull, but intent. She was going to meet her one great hour in all the tired day.

At the boundary of an immense pasture, nearly a whole township of her old home, she let down bars, climbed up a cliffy knoll that broke brusquely the suavity of the plain, and flung herself down on a rock. The great, still, lonesome world stretched miles away at her feet; lovely sunset lights burned over her; the wind stirred her shawl gently and fluttered her hair about her face. She was an odd and contradictory little figure, from her hair, parted rigorously and strained back into a hard lump, yet leaping out all around her forehead in little flags of curls, down to her scant, clay-colored dress that somehow managed to flirt out riotously. Her face was slender and brown and irregular, with a rather droll small nose and very light gray eyes. These wide, light eyes, steady and luminous, set in her brown face above her whimsical nose and childish mouth, startled you as if you should creep up slyly in the wood upon a pretty dryad, to have her face you swiftly with the regard of an angel.

Althea's breath had quieted to smoothness now. She stood up, clasped her hands loosely in front of her, and began to sing. Out of the slim vase of her throat poured a voice golden like sunlight, soft like water, infinitely sweet. It quavered with the

memory of "old, unhappy, far-off things," it throbbed to the "glory and the rapture and the dream," it caressed with the tenderness of all the loves that ever have been. All that was Althea Penton, and that could never speak out, perhaps never act out, rose into the quiet air. The songs were the lyrics of the youth of our grandfathers, "Old Robin Gray," "Sweet Afton," and their melancholy hymns—but it was neither words nor rhythm that mattered; it was the beauty that flowed through them.

When the last song finished on a low note, Althea stood a moment motionless, her head still raised, her gaze upon the clouds. A deep color burned in her cheeks, her eyes were pools of glowing light. She might have been a priestess of the sun, hymning good night. Then with a flick of her dun skirts she ran down the knoll, a farmer's maid once more, seeking her cows.

She herded her two skittish cows into the barn, milked them capably, fed the chickens in their run, and hung the pails of milk in the wooden house over the spring. She feared cows and detested chickens, but a household without butter and eggs was to her unthinkable, and no one else would bother over them.

She began to set supper in a passion of speed, broiling great platters of meat as for a feast of giants. She did not sing over her work—that was a rite not to be sullied with toil—but she whistled a clear pipe.

Three big, silent men, red from soap and water at the back door, seated themselves, with just a nod to her, and ate in a steady, appreciative silence. Supper over, her father and brothers sat around the lamp, smoking, mending harness, and talking in slow, infrequent words of the day's work. Althea washed up the dishes with stern laboriousness; it would have been so pleasant this tired night to clatter them through with a lick and a promise. The last pan polished off, she wrapped herself in the little shawl and sat down on the doorstep. The two dogs thudded across



She started out into the sunshine. She was going to meet her one great hour in all the tired day.

the floor to crowd in beside her, their heads in her lap. Her father hitched his chair around to peer out beyond the circle of light.

"Ain't you feared you'll ketch cold, daut. It's a kind o' green night o' spring?" His speech burred deep of the rock-bound coast of his birth.

"No, sir; I'm warm."

"Ain't it time you was to bed?" As with many another parent, Joel Pen-

ton's affection took the form of worrying at his daughter.

"I ain't goin' to bed yet, father, no matter what time it is," she told him, her defiance softened by a humble voice.

She rested her chin in her palm and stared out into the dark. The wind had quieted; the night was absolutely still; the sky was a thick, soft black, like velvet, in which the eager crescent

of the young moon swung low to the earth. From the forest came the eerie whoooo of an owl; across the river sounded the mournful howl of a timber wolf. To the girl the night was the abomination of desolation. She could have wept with dreariness. Yet, glancing over her shoulder, she saw in the faces of her father and brothers, grave as they were, an alertness, a light, never there in the old days back three thousand miles—and sometimes it seemed three thousand years—in New England. The romance of the young, heroic West stirred in their sober blood. She felt it for others; for herself it was all the harshest prose.

This was Saturday night. What would they be doing if at home now? She closed her eyes to dream true. Her oldest sister, Eliza, was just taking out of the oven the Sunday baked beans and rye-an'-Injin pudding; her father and two oldest brothers were leaning over the gate, talking crops to a neighbor; her younger brothers were wrestling and playing rough-and-tumble games on the grass; her sister Debby was stitching a fine seam in the last of the light. The great elm threw long shadows across the doorsill; the lilac bushes spilled their ancient perfume on the air; the smoke of other homes curled skyward close to theirs; the spire of the old meetinghouse, where generations of Pentons had worshiped, pointed a slender finger heavenward. By and by the dark sifted down around the old homestead; the boys trooped off to bed; the Saturday-night bell rang out a gentle, peaceful good night.

Althea started up, quivering. "The bell!"

Her father and brothers woke from a drowse. "What? Eh?"

"Nothin'!" She laughed unsteadily. "I guess I kind o' dozed off. I'll go to bed now."

Yet she sat longer on the steps. There come strange moments in which life, thrust aside by the keen haste of living, grips us and cries: "What am I? What are you making of me?" and will not let us go till we answer it. Such a moment held Althea bound

now. Her mind traveled slowly over her childhood and girlhood, so peaceful, safe, and happy, and then rested on her present days, barren of all pleasures, companionship, religion, even of adventures that might whirl the pattern of the dead monotony of loneliness, privation, and toil. How long was she doomed to this? All her life? And the length of that? She moved her strong, brown hands up to her face and felt in herself the strength of a hundred years.

And why was she here? She understood her father's place in the scheme of things, the delicate fingers of her instinctive sympathy touching his life and realizing how the years of labor on his rocky farm to rear his large family had at last worn him to the breaking point. Then the war had called him. When he had enlisted in the war, he had torn up the roots sunk deep in the old farm, and he could never again force them back into it. A comrade in arms had spurred him on to the new, rich West. With the dogged courage that had made him fight New England soil for forty years and rebels for four, he had set off across the continent. His eldest children he had left behind in their own homes; his two younger sons he had found eager to go; his youngest child he had packed into the prairie schooner as if she had had no more will in the matter than the tents.

The girl, brooding out in the darkness, understood—for hers was a sensitive spirit—what this wild life was to the men; how primitive joys surged within them in their battle with the wilderness. If only three drops of the ancient gypsy blood of the race had coursed through her Puritan body she, too, would have exulted in this great, free world. Here was the wide amphitheater for heroic drama, and all her heart yearned for one small, cramped village with its safe, slow hours. What was it to her that she was one of the makers of a new world, who longed only for gossip with her mates under the shade of her grape arbor? She counted the time in months since she

had spoken to a woman. She shivered coldly at the thought of the pleasures of this fierce land, the swirling, foam-drenched scud down the stream in an Indian canoe, the flying rush across the prairies, clinging to a half-tamed horse. What irony of life had flung her, a small garden posy twinkling happily in a sheltered bed, out on to the wind-blown mountainside?

She was around again at the beginning of her pondering. Why was she always the meek instrument of her family's might? Had she, ever since she was a baby child, made good any dear desire against their will? She slipped through her fingers the rosary of renunciations, bead by bead; her lover, whose face rose mistily out of the past across the weary miles, her music—ah, that wound knew no cicatrice!—now, her very self, for who could find the gay Althea Penton of Pettipaug days in this dumb, drab creature of the cabin?

"It ain't right," she murmured soft in her throat. "I got rights. I'm *somebody*, too."

Some barrier that held in her passions seemed to snap, so that they flooded all her obedience, as water flows over the land when the ice breaks up.

"I'm goin' home!"

And somehow, now, she was content. She did not know how or when she could win freedom, only she felt herself pushed along the path to home by some big, fresh power, as it were outside herself. She went in to bed, kissing her men good night as tenderly as if it were good-by.

The next morning she saw her father and brothers ride away to hunt strayed cattle, with none of the forlorn sinking of the heart felt on other such days. This dreary fashion of life was nearly over. She baked and cleaned and churned all the morning. At noon she flew down to the spring for a bucket of water to cook herself a hasty meal.

She cast noticing eyes about among her stock, for foxes were bold to steal her chicks, and ran at once to the pas-

ture bars to find out why old Jen was ranging up and down the edge of the stream and what had become of the colt. There was the colt in the wide world across the stream, usually a deep enough barrier to even his courage. Althea darted back to the house, returned with a pan of salt, and rattled it alluringly close to the bank. The colt stretched his pretty neck, nickered desirously, then, as if salt could be procured at other seasons while this alone was freedom's hour, kicked up his heels and galloped several rods away.

Althea groaned in distress, but not one minute did she hesitate. The colt was the most valuable horse on the ranch; he must not be lost. With strong, awkward hands she saddled old Jen, climbed on to her back, and pushed down to the edge of the river. The water flowed darkly swift, the rocks showed jagged and slippery, the mare had a stumbling gait, yet on Althea rode, her brown face pale, her light eyes wide open. The mare slithered, lurched, and plunged, but somehow floundered up the bank, her rider sliding about in the saddle and clinging desperately to both bridle and pommel. The colt greeted them pleasantly, but when Althea reached for his mane, he shook his head and bounded just out of reach, his eyes rolling with the joke of it.

Again and again he did this until Althea was stiff from knocking the saddle and utterly breathless. Suddenly he flicked up his head, whickered twice, and galloped off at a steaming pace. The old mare followed her child in her pounding trot. Althea looked about her timidly. All signs of home were gone, she might have been twenty miles from the cabin. Ahead stretched a little wood from which came an answering whicker.

"Injin ponies don't call," she found herself saying with dry lips. No Indians had been seen in that part for several years, still there were hundreds of them to the south. The colt trotted into the woods, the wiser mare halted. Althea could see three horses hobbled by the opening, and now three men

also, although the sun was against clearer vision. The frontier was quick with stories of women who had flung themselves into the river or shot themselves rather than be taken by the Indians. Here was neither stream nor gun. She sat still as a stone, waiting. Now she saw they were white men, high booted, heavily armed, like all of the land. She gulped with relief, and had a foolish longing to hide her face in Jen's mane and cry.

The man who reached her first was big, and burly, and bearded, the frontiersman of the old pictures, and as he saw her perched precariously on the mare his leathery face creased into smiles. Althea's mind woke in a blaze of mortification. The heat of her struggles steamed in her face fiercely, runnels of hair flowed down her back from her once neat coil, her dress was twisted askew, and one stocking dangled loose over her foot.

"Kind o' rough ride, sis?" The man laughed rumblingly down deep in his chest.

Althea smoked in the fire of her own blushes.

The second man now stood at her off side. "Want I should ketch your colt?" He did not seem to notice her particularly.

"Please," quivered the girl, at last finding tongue. "I've chased him miles."

The stranger's eyes questioned her. He was not many years older than she herself, tall, wiry, and lean, with no special claim to good looks, but with clear, hazel eyes, very friendly and pleasant, and a smile of charming good humor.

"I live to Penton Ranch, at Blue Rock Ford," she answered his silent question.

"That ain't far," the older man. "Light an' eat. We're jest cookin' the grub."

Althea knew the law of hospitality for this strange world.

"Ride over with me an' I'll get you a real dinner on a cook stove."

The older stranger looked over at his comrade, who was already catching up

the colt with swift skill. She repeated her invitation as he led up the now mild-mannered colt.

"Thank you. That kind o' a meal's a treat to us. You swap horses with me. Your mare's got a gait like a buck saw."

Althea clung to old Jen. "Better the devil you know," ran in her head. "Oh, no, *thank* you," she cried urgently.

"Why, Sam's gentled all right. You'll feel like you were in a rockin'-chair makin' tatin'." He smiled up at her with amused kindness. "Come now," he coaxed, reaching up his hand to help her alight.

"Oh, no, no," shrinking away into the saddle.

The stranger laughed softly, and without another word lifted her down to the ground.

"Oh," she protested, "I ain't a little girl!"

He looked so serious she knew he was hiding inner laughter.

"Sure," he said gravely. "Here, Dick, hold the colt while I cinch up."

While the exchange of saddles was going on, Althea braided her flying hair, and straightened her disordered garments. She stood beside the buckskin Sam in great misery, afraid to argue, afraid to mount. The stranger smiled on her reassuringly, and she thought how white his teeth were under his little mustache.

"Just let him lope 'long his own way," he advised her, then without more formality lifted her into the saddle.

The other man was already mounted and ready. The younger gathered up his own reins and the colt's bridle and called: "Come on, Louie."

It seemed to Althea that his face settled into a hard sadness as he waited for the third of the party to come forward. This was an amazingly handsome boy with a smooth, dark face and melancholy eyes, as soft as a deer's. He spurred up his horse alongside of Dick's, and the two others followed him. After the first clutch at Sam's mane, she found, surprisingly, there was real pleasure in his swinging lope;

she had supposed all steeds jolted one's bones loose from their sockets after the habit of old Jen.

At the Ford, Dick pulled up for an instant.

"Watch out; the water's kind o' deep," he warned, then plunged in.

The stranger spoke close to Althea's face. "Sam's sure as a mule. Give him his head; he won't slip." His voice was soothingly kind.

Althea squeezed her eyes shut, drew in her breath, and held on with every muscle. Certainly, Sam was clever; he had her over and up the bank before she had time to be frightened.

"Dinner'll be ready in ten minutes." The words floated back as she ran to the house. But before she even looked at her fire, she darted into her tiny pocket of a bedroom, twisted her hair into a tight, hideous knot, jumped into a clean dress, the scantiest and dullest she owned, and pinned a prim collar around her neck. Having made herself as neat and as unattractive as possible, she set out the very best meal the cabin could offer. The strangers ate in hungry speed, and in frontier silence.

"Mighty good dinner, miss," Dick told her as he finished his third cup of coffee.

"Mighty good cook, too." The younger stranger smiled at her.

"My menfolks seem to like my cookin'." She flushed prettily all over her brown face. "Maybe I can cook—if I can't ride," in a sudden twinkle.

The younger stranger glanced about the room. "Dick, fetch her a couple o' buckets o' water, will you, while I saddle up?"

"Obligated for the dinner, miss." The big man bowed clumsily as he started for the spring.

The other took her hand in his.

"Thank you very much. I haven't been in a home like this in—a good long time." His clear eyes, his honest smile, were all telling her he liked her.

Althea, a creature all throbbing impulses and flying gusts of desire, longed to fling her arms about him and cry:

"Stay here! I'm so lonely an' you're so nice."

The wish was in her reddened cheeks, in her big, glowing eyes, but all she said was, in a precise voice: "I'm pleased you enjoyed your dinner."

He shook hands hard and strode out. The boy, Louie, followed silently. He had not once spoken a word. Althea walked by him, wondering about the relation between these three, so good-natured to each other, so indifferent. Gradually, with no abrupt movements, the boy stood still in the path.

"Got a gun?" His voice was a sort of whispering sweetness.

"Over the fireplace."

"Not that. A pistol?"

"What for?"

He swept his arms loose from his side to show his belt empty of pistol or knife.

"He's got 'em."

"Dick?"

"No, him; the sheriff."

"Sheriff!"

"He's takin' me down to Seven Days to hang me."

Althea started aside. "What for?"

"There's a man killed back at Frenchman's Crick, an' he's got to ketch some one for it, so he roped me. I was round handy."

"You'll be set free at the trial," she comforted him. "You never did it." For who could believe any evil of this gentle, melancholy boy?

"You don't know him," in a sharp cry of passion. "His brother's the feller really did it, an' so he's bound to fix the jury again' me."

His voice had never risen above a murmur, and hers was quieted to it. He turned on her now his young, soft face and sad eyes.

"You think I knifed an' ol' man in the back?" he breathed reproachfully.

"Never!" Then distressfully: "Oh, Louie, I can't believe he's that mean, either. He won't cheat away any man's life."

The boy smiled with patience for her ignorance. "You don't know him," he said again simply, with the quiet of conviction. "I got to hang for it."



When Althea reached for his mane, the colt shook his head and bounded just out of reach, his eyes rolling with the joke of it.

"You must get away!"

"How?"

"An' hide you!"

"Where?"

His gentle questions had the finality of fate. Althea wrung her hands into a knot of anguish up under her apron. Fantastic plans of rescue rioted through her head, to be flung aside as impossible.

"If the boys were here!" she murmured. "If there was some place to hide!" Suddenly her eyes grew palely brilliant. "The cave in under Blue Rock! Nobody knows 'bout it but me."

"Where?" in an acute whisper.

"See, there by the ford? That great sort o' crag in the bank? Blue Rock Ford this is from it; it's that queer color."

"Go on!"

"This side, in under the bushes an' vines, there's a hole big 'nough to hide a man. It don't show from any part, but one day I fell into it. I could bring

you food an' water, an' you could hide up till——"

"How I get there?"

It was a splash of ice water on her ardor, and like a drowning wave, the sheriff's voice sounded:

"Ready, Louie?"

He spoke in his pleasant voice, but now, to the girl's mind, he watched the boy with strange intentness. He had mounted and Dick, also. For an instant a red cataract of violence poured through the girl's blood. If she should seize her father's rifle, and shoot both the sheriff and his helper as they rode away? Then sanity, cooling and restraining, claimed her again.

"Besides," she murmured with a wry smile that showed the West was seeping into her system unconsciously. "I couldn't hit him even if I tried."

Louie moved away without a word, but as he went, he turned on her one look, tragic in its appeal.

Althea darted forward, caught the

tall sheriff by his knee, and clung to him despairingly.

"Don't hang him!" she implored. "Let him go! He's innocent! I know he's innocent!"

The sheriff took the shock of her onset without a twitch. He neither looked at her nor spoke, only fixed his eyes on the prisoner. Dick burst out gruffly:

"What lies you been givin' her?"

"He didn't kill that man," Althea urged impassionedly.

The sheriff sighed wearily. "I hope he didn't!"

"Can't you tell just to look at him he *couldn't* do a murder?" she urged.

The sheriff's eyes came back to her now, a smile all sweetness in them.

"That ain't mine to say. The jury fixes that."

She clung to his knee, her weight bending him down from the saddle.

"You'll get an honest jury?" Her big, light eyes filled her whole face with an extraordinary pale fire.

He loosened her hold very gently, both her hands in his.

"I took my oath to carry out the law honestly, the best I know, without fear or favor," he answered with deep gravity; then locking his hands over hers in a bruising grip, he dropped them, drew up his bridle, and called in the old formula, but harshly now:

"Come on, Louie!"

Althea sat on a stone watching the three men ride through the gate, down the pasture, across the ford, and so out of sight. She struggled to think it all out straight—the innocence of the boy, of which she was certain; the goodness of the sheriff, of which she wanted to be convinced; and the relation of those two contrary facts. It was too hard. After a long while she went into the cabin to clear away the dinner, announcing aloud, in the habit of talking to herself common to lonely people:

"I know what I think 'bout all this—it's an awful queer, wicked country where such things happen right 'long an' I'm goin' back home where folks live like human bein's."

That night, when all the family were

snug around the stove, Althea looked up from the sock she was knitting to say easily:

"Father, who takes care o' folks an' ketches bad people an' like that round these parts?"

"The folks themselves, when it's so it's done at all," her brother Ben informed her, grinning.

Old Penton answered more explicitly. "We got a sheriff, daut, 'lected last fall, an up-an'-comin', able man, folks say. Dick O'Neill's his name, ain't it, Ben?"

"O'Neill's the dep'ty, father," Ben corrected. "The sheriff's a young fellow name o'—Thunder! It's rainin' an' the roof leaks 'gain!" He sprang up, as a great drop splashed down on him.

"Come on to rain, eh?" old Penton commented. "That'll loosen up the snow in the mountains."

Althea knitted on as usual, but her breath drew in quickly. Now she would never know the stranger's name, for she could never have courage to ask again. As for the morning's adventure, that she would keep as a secret always.

All the next day and the next the rain poured down in torrents. The men, outdoors only to feed the stock, lounged by the fire, their big bodies crowding the cabin spaces. Althea, a prey to a queer unrest, fidgeted about from one unfinished task to another.

"Daut," her father reproved her, "you act like a witch cat. Ain't you got no work you can settle to?"

"I'm tired o' work," with mild conviction.

The brothers laughed, but the old man, shocked in his sense of principle, admonished her with severity. "A good life's made up o' work; might as well say you're tired o' bein' good."

Althea stopped her aimless walk to stand in front of his chair—a narrow, straight figure in a tight brown dress, with hair brushed harshly off her face. She opened her lips to cry aloud: "Am tired o' bein' good!" Instead, she began to sing. The songs she chose were the old man's favorite hymns, venge-

ful war psalms of ancient Covenanters, who believed all their enemies were God's, too, but the golden stream of her voice washed them free of all earthly fury and swept them up, a marvelous offering, to Heaven itself. As she sang, all rigid lines relaxed, the strands of her hair loosened into soft little curls, even her stiff dress seemed to fold her in more graciously. She sang gloriously because her heart was full of unrest and fever and yearning. Her brothers stopped whistling; her father beat time softly on his knee.

"My king, daut!" the old man cried as she finished. "Ye've got a voice into you! If things had been diff'rent, I make no manner o' doubt you'd been a singer."

His daughter stroked his hair back from his forehead. "I might yet," she told him mysteriously.

The third day, although the rain still fell, its fury had lessened to a drizzle. Althea, booted, high kilted, and in a hooded cloak, splashed her way out to her chickens. She could hear the river raging like the sea, and even make out its foaming edge.

"Awful high water," she told her brother Seth.

"A sight o' snow in the mountains to come down," he answered as he entered the barn.

"Must be up six feet." She plowed through the mud down to the bank. "Sam couldn't ford it now."

She began to go over for the hundredth time that queer morning. At the tall crag above the ford, she stopped to watch the water rushing by, the current dark with mud, but foam-crested with the haste of its journey. All the world of prairie, mountain, and forest, drearily familiar, achingly lonely, was sodden with moisture, the thin rain pierced her coldly. Not a sight or a sound of human life reached her.

"I'm a-goin' home," she said with resolution, and turned to the cabin, but it was of far-away New England, the home of her heart, that she spoke.

Yet she lingered, looking down at the

vines and bushes growing thick around Blue Rock.

"I could 'a' hid him in there," she murmured, "if only I could 'a' got him to it. Do you think they're tryin' him over to Seven Days now?"

Her eyes focused suddenly. The bushes had not been like that last time she had seen them, and—did they move?

"It's me—Louie." Just a breath of sound.

All her habits of repression helped the girl now. She stood quietly where she was, a screen between the cave and the cabin. In among the bushes she saw the smooth face and limpid eyes of the boy prisoner.

"You wet?" she whispered, the first question that stirred her dazed mind.

"Not much. The cave's dry. I'm hungry."

"Yes. How you get here?"

"Last night, through the woods." He motioned away behind the ranch.

Althea could make out now that his face was bluish white, his eyes sunken.

"How you get away from him?"

The boy halted wearily in his tale. "At Dead Run, we had to swim our horses. Mine lost his head, went down stream, and threw me off. I went under, but I can swim like a fish. I came up 'gain in a hollow in under some rocks. My coat fell off an' spun round like it was me, an' was carried over some rapids. They followed it a good ways down, I guess, before they found out their mistake. When they came back—if they did come back—I was a mile away in the woods."

"How you manage to reach here?"

"Walked—crawled—oh, somehow. It ain't so far."

"You thought I'd hide you?"

His voice trembled with weakness. "I was beat out. I remembered you told 'bout the cave. I had to hide somewhere. Them in the cabin—do they know 'bout me?"

"I can't tell," remembering the family habit of silence.

"Well, I got to chance it. I'll die here. Cut 'long home now, an' when it's 'bout dark, I'll come in out o' the

woods. You'll be a'mighty surprised to see me, won't you? An' you'll jump at any story I put to 'em?"

"Ain't you goin' to tell them the truth?"

"Spanish Louie, run off from the sheriff?" He laughed faintly; then, with slow and gentle pleading: "You see, dear, I can't trust even your folks. But I trust you." All his hunted innocence begged in the depths of his dusky eyes.

"You couldn't go back on a fellow that's at your mercy, could you? Could you?"

Althea moistened her lips, dry as if in fever. She had never faced a situation like this. She knew that her father, Old England's fidelity to the law in the warp and woof of his New England nature, would return the fugitive to the sheriff. Her brothers would not disobey their father. What right had she to disobey? What standard had she to set up against her father's age and righteousness?

"I'll stand by you, Louie." It was a vow.

The hour till dark passed like the time of a new recruit waiting for his first shot, now dragging heavily, now galloping like a race. Just as it seemed she could stand the strain not one minute more the dogs barked. In a moment Ben had flung open the door.

"Come in, man," they heard him call. "Why, you're half drowned!"

Louie, a wretched figure, entered, sank into a chair by the fire, and began to answer the questions pressed upon him.

"Lost my horse at Dead River Ford last night, tryin' to make it through in the rain. I'm headed for Foxboro. My folks are sick up there. My name's Bowers, Ed Bowers."

Foxboro was a mining camp fifty miles up in the mountains.

"Pretty coarse kind o' weather for travelin'," the old man ruminated.

"That's so. But you see it's sickness," Louie answered with his gentle melancholy.

"Risky fordin' a river, too, this weather," his host went on.

"If it's the only way along," the boy countered.

"Set up to the table. Supper's ready an' there's plenty for all." The old man roused himself to hospitality.

The boy ate sparingly, considering his fast, but he drank cup after cup of black coffee. Then he asked with deprecation:

"Can I stretch out on a blanket some place! I'm dog tired, an' I got to push 'long at daylight."

Ben offered him his bed in the loft, and Seth inquired how he hoped to make Foxboro.

"I thought you maybe had a horse I could borrow," answered the boy timidly. "I ain't got much o' any money on me." He pulled out a lean bag and shook out a few coins into the palm of his hand. "I'll be 'long this way 'gain next week. It's my mother that's sick."

Old Penton coughed doubtfully. He could never overcome his New England prejudice against a stranger, but his Westernized son cried heartily:

"Certain. We're kind o' short o' horses right now, but I got one that'll take you the whole fifty mile at a good, steady jog."

Louie rose wearily. "Good night an' thank you folks, all. Good night, miss." He just nodded at Althea as he climbed the ladder to bed, but, his foot on the rung, he shot her a covert glance, heavy with meaning.

"Pretty appearin' boy, but kind o' sickly," was the old man's comment on him. "Daughter, shake down the fire an' we'll get us to bed, too."

At daylight Louie rode away. All the morning Althea followed him in her thoughts, wondering how it would be with him at Foxboro. He must have friends there who would hide him. Wondering, too, if the sheriff would pick up the trail and appear at the cabin. At that she grew hot and cold. He would tell her father of his first visit, and how would her silence seem? In the afternoon she carried her anxieties out into the sunshine by the river. If the sheriff hadn't crossed it, she



"My menfolks seem to like my cookin'." She flushed prettily all over her brown face. "Maybe I can cook—if I can't ride," in a sudden twinkle.

doubted if he could now, it was so swollen by the rains.

"My, it's deep!" She dabbled a stout-shod shoe in its fringes. "Louie's on the right side o' it for Foxboro. What a pretty branch o' alders! I'm goin' to have it," with characteristic impetuosity. She leaned out over the river for the white-wreathed branch torn from some bush by the storm. She swayed perilously, catching herself on her feet by a quick twist.

"I'll have that yet!" in a kind of

nervous intensity due to the week of fierce excitement.

On the bank a rough skiff of her brothers' knocked against the bank where it was tied to a stake. As only a little water dampened the bottom of the boat, she concluded Ben or Seth must have bailed it out since the rain. By pushing this boat out to the end of the rope and kneeling over the stern, she could just reach the flowering branch with the tips of her fingers. It drew close in, sidled away, dipped into

the river, Althea prodding it cautiously with the paddle from the boat.

"If I can get it, I'll tell me it's a sign I can go back home an' learn to sing."

The branch floated elusively away. "Oh," she cried piteously. Then, repenting, it drifted back into her hands.

"There!" flourishing it about. "Now I know it's to be that I go home."

Her flicker of play died down to the sober ashes of work waiting in the cabin; she paddled the boat back to shore.

"Forever! Why, what——"

The bank in which the stake was driven was now a good foot under water, and even as she watched, the water spread thinly up the pasture.

"I never saw the river rise like that. I guess I'd better get me ashore pretty quick." She stripped off her shoes and stockings to wade.

Her heart raced, stopped, dropped into a queer faintness, for she saw the river sucked back in a smooth, dark sheet, leaving stake and mud bare, then lifted into a vast crest that poured over the stake.

"The dam to Sanger's Mill is broke!" flashed from her.

The wave swept the loosely tied rope up over the top of the stake, and spun the boat in a dizzy reel out into the wide stream. Althea dropped to her knees in the bottom of the skiff, clutching the gunwales with rigid hands, unable with the one paddle to steer any course. The little boat headed down the valley at a frightful speed, now leaping high like a horse, now diving deep like a fish, hurling spray up over its passenger in showers. Althea thought of Blue Rock Rapids, where the river cleft the mountains like a sword, and sickened with terror. She closed her eyes and prayed.

The speed of its course saved the boat. It shot the rapids like an arrow, without a swerve to right or left, and swept out into the valley beyond. The valley flanged out broadly on either side, offering a wide dish to hold the water. The main current still bore the skiff along at a strong sweep.

Althea loosened her fierce grip. If

she had lived through the rapids, this steady, although fast, pace was not to be dreaded. She was drenched and shaking with cold, but she did not know it, for her brain still leaped and plunged with every swing of the boat.

"I wonder if the cabin's safe!" was her first, characteristically unselfish idea. "It's bound to be, so high on the knoll. Poor father an' the boys! They'll be crazier'n loons over me."

She peered about her. The mist-drenched landscape of prairie, trees, and far-off mountains gave her no clew to the locality; she might be two or two hundred miles from home.

"Where'll I end up?" Her teeth clicked together. "Our river runs into the big one somewhere 'way down the valley."

A picture of herself, swept down, down, league upon league, relentless to the sea, possessed her horribly.

"I'd be starved before that." She took what comfort she could thus.

She saw the cabin of a settler on the bank, safe, although the river lipped its doorsill. She shrieked with all her strength, a husky, mist-drowned cry. The man in the doorway neither saw nor heard, yet his presence heartened her some way. This sailing on through lands forsaken of man and beast was like the desolation of the Flood.

A bluff jutted out into the river, forcing its course around. The boat took the bend at an awkward angle, veering over. Althea gulped in fresh fear and tried to help the struggling boat with a cautious paddle. It veered more acutely. She sank back again helplessly.

Twilight was sifting down over the world, blurring the shore into a wet gray. At the thought of the black night coming, Althea screamed again and again frantically. Away off some wild bird of the dark answered in an eerie shriek.

"I *won't* go lost-witted!" She set her teeth in her lip till a bead of blood trickled down her chin. "We never had such works as floods back home." Even in her extremity of peril her

heart gave an aching throb for that lost home, dear and safe.

She saw ahead an island in mid-stream, splitting the river unevenly. The main part rushed by at the right, a smaller channel took the left. Her dulled eyes flashed alive to the chances in this island. If only she could steer a course to the left, she might run the boat upon the island, which was high enough to outtop any flood. She thrust in her paddle deeply, careless now of gibing. The boat yawed dangerously, but took the shallow course behind the island. Althea stood up, painter in hand, ready to leap ashore on the first point that offered.

She waited, tense, rigid. Some hidden whirlpool snatched at the boat, twisted it awry from the island, and shoved it ahead. The chance was gone! Not so, for Althea, in her despair, had leaped. The space was wide, the take-off rocking. She missed.

Almost as she touched the water, something caught her and swung her up on to the rocks.

"An Injin! A grizzly!" rushed through her brain, for indeed the grasp was violent enough for a wild animal.

"You hurt?" A man's voice, panting, but gentle, said in her ears.

"I'm glad you ain't a grizzly," she answered foolishly, like a child.

The man laughed. "I'm 'fraid I was right rough. It was a kind o' speedy proposition to catch you."

He laid her down on a strip of grass above the rock. Althea, staring up at him in the dusk, recognized him as the sheriff, but he made no sign of remembering her.

She had a queer little pang at her own trifling place in his scheme of things. Why, she had thought of nothing but him for nearly a week.

The sheriff felt her over carefully, flexing her arms and bending her knees.

"Nothin' broke," he announced. "Pretty well jolted up, ain't you?"

Althea nodded faintly.

He fumbled in his pocket. "Drink a little," he coaxed, holding a flask to her lips.

"I don't like it," pushing away his hand.

"I don't reckon you do, but it'll do you a heap o' good. You're colder'n a fish." He tilted the flask up again. "Now, one, two—*drink!*"

She found a fiery fluid running down her throat and a quick heat through her body. In the easing down of the strain she began to cry, loudly and piteously, like a child.

"There! There!" soothed the stranger. Without embarrassment he took her in his arms, and rocked her back and forth as if she had been a baby.

For a moment she lay in the hollow of his shoulder, feeling safe and comforted. Then her maiden dignity whelmed her in shame. She gulped down her sobs, tore herself free, rubbed away her tears with the palms of her hands, and ordered tremblingly:

"Let me go!"

He slipped her from his arms, but still kept a steady hand at her back.

"We must get under cover an' dry off." He smiled at her reassuringly.

"Do folks live here?"

"Not now, but there's a good 'nough cabin with a fireplace."

"I must go home." Her voice sounded like a child's again.

"Not to-night. You see the river's plenty deep even on this side, an' I'd rather not negotiate it at night."

At this Althea realized she saw the sheriff's face only because it was close to hers. "Well," she conceded in a gasp.

The sheriff wasted no time in questions as to how she came there.

"You able to climb?"

Althea inspected the shadowy bulk of the hill above her.

"Of course," scornfully.

"Keep right behind me," he admonished, and set off up a kind of rocky trail.

She took two obedient steps after him, stopped, started again, stopped again. A thousand pricks, stabs, scratches, had attacked her poor bare feet.

"These little stones are mean to roll,"

the sheriff called over his shoulder. "Give me your hand."

Clinging to his hand, she limped cringing after him. He stopped with a jerk.

"See here! you're hurt." He leaned down from above her anxiously.

"It's my feet," Althea cried in shame. "I left my shoes an' stockin's in the boat."

"Oh, Lord, that is a scrape!" He laughed ruefully.

With a sudden swing he scooped her up in his arms and plowed heavily up the hill. The distance was short, but even a slim girl is a load on a climb. He was speechless when he dropped her heavily on the doorstep of a black old cabin. As for Althea, she burned with shame.

"He thinks I'm a pretty fool!" she told herself, huddled in a heap on the step.

The young man called from within. "Now we'll warm up." He still panted. "I got a fire started."

Althea's nerves sprung agonizingly; she heard a huge beast blowing out its breath by the edge of the cabin.

"Quick!" she shrieked. "A bear!"

The sheriff stepped over her composedly. "Clear out, Sam," he ordered. "It's my horse. Come now, dry you."

He drew her to her feet and led her, pattering gingerly, to the fire. Althea, further humiliated by this last manifestation of cowardice, curled herself on the hearthstone close to the fire, thinking, as a hundred times before, she was not born to be a frontier woman.

"I wish I had some dry clothes for you an' a good hot supper," he mourned. "All I got left is some bread. I'll toast that."

He piled the hearth with wood until the flames roared, and holding a slice of bread skewered by a stick, passed her a hot slice of toast. Althea, steaming in her wet garments, munched it gratefully. The light shone on the man's straight shoulders, and well-shaped head, and on the girl's pretty hair, now a mass of damp curls, and clear, brilliant eyes.

"How you come to be takin' a trip

in a boat a day like this?" the sheriff asked, as he handed her a second piece of toast.

"It's a dreadful foolish story," Althea confessed, "an' you'll laugh." She told him briefly of the long days shut in by the rain and her walk by the river.

"What you doin' in a boat fresheet time anyhow?" The sheriff shot this at her in an amused voice.

Althea blushed a hotter red than the heat of the fire burned in her face. Was she always to be in some ridiculous situation before him? She told her story in little jerks, ending:

"Of course 'twas childish to want those flowers, but you see we don't have many out here, an' they were like spring home."

"Home?"

"Back East." A long shivering sigh shook her at the words.

He misunderstood the sound. "Turn round so your back is to the fire; you'll dry faster," smiling in the way that irritated her.

"So you wanted those posies, eh?"

"How you get here yourself?" Turn about was fair play.

The sheriff was embarrassed, shifting his eyes from her to stare into the fire.

"Oh, me? I was travelin' toward Seven Days, an' I had kind o' an accident an' had to retrace my trail. There's a ford right here by this knoll, but I made it just too late to beat this flood proposition. Sam's right long on horse qualities, but he's short on fish ones, so we had all the troubles we wanted swimmin' across here, an' thought we'd wait until mornin' to make the other bank. I saw your boat a-comin' an' somethin' looked like a dog crouched in it. That's how I happened to be so handy."

"I thought you were a grizzly," the instant retort.

The sheriff laughed. "An' all the time we were pretty nice folks."

But his explanation had brought back to her his somber "accident." She wondered where his deputy was, and whether he himself were riding hard

on poor Louie's trail. Every hour that delayed him, then, was so much gain. She pondered, her eyes searching the fire, too. Should she tell him she knew? It was hateful to dwell on that ugly side of him. Could it be true he was hounding this boy to save his own brother? She studied his face again and found it a good face, honest, and kind, and brave.

"But you can't tell out here," she said aloud, in despairing recognition of her inaptness for the big, new country.

"You say?" Then with the utmost coolness, remarking: "Why, you ain't turned round. Here, friend," he lifted her into the new position.

Rage bristled up within the girl at this lack of ceremony. "If I'm a friend, I ain't a new one," she cried out upon him.

"I reckoned I'd seen you before. Now where?" He leaned forward, his smile showing his white teeth.

"I live at Blue Rock Ford," drawing back into the shadow stiffly.

"Blue Rock Ford?" he mused; then, with a flare of memory: "You're the little girl the colt got away from!"

"An' your prisoner got away from you!"

Instantly his face was stern. "Yes, he got away."

"I'm glad! I hope you *never* catch him!"

He watched the fire with inscrutable eyes. "I'd hope so, too, if I wasn't the sheriff!" Now he sighed drearily.

"You huntin' him now?"

"Yes."

"Toward Blue Rock Ford?"

"Up to Foxboro." He swung around on her sharply. "What else did Louie tell you that mornin'?"

"Only he was to be tried for murder at Seven Days an'—an' he was innocent; another man did it." She could not tell him Louie had accused the sheriff's own brother. "Don't you hate it, huntin' down folks like that?"

"No. The folks I hunt deserve to be caught up. It's only the worst sort o' fellows I go for. Things that'd jail a man back East, why, we don't even notice 'em here. I think o' them I'm

protectin', too, little children an' helpless women—like you."

"Louie's only a boy."

He made no answer to this, staring into the fire.

"I think it's a dreadful country!" vehemently.

"How long you lived here?"

"Goin' on for seven years."

"I was born out there"—he swept his hand toward the darkness—"in a prairie schooner, right 'long side the trail. I love it—the bigness of it, an' the big men it breeds!" His voice thrilled with the deep loyalty of the pioneer to the dear-bought land. "It breeds big women, too; them that'll go through flood and fire for you, an' load your gun for you to the last cartridge, an' then act as if it all went in the day's work. My mother was one o' that kind."

Althea cringed in the darkness. What a poor creature he must think her, afraid of a horse, crying at a wetting! Shame made her fierce.

"I'd go back to-morrow, if I could."

The sheriff rose, his height elongated startlingly in the shadow. He looked cool and strong, but not the formidable figure the law colored him.

"I reckon you'd better turn in. I'm distressed I can't give you supper, but I'll try to make you halfways comfortable."

He spread his saddle blanket by the fire for a bed, set down his saddle for a pillow, and pulled off his coat.

"Lie right in close to the fire an' let me cover you with this."

"What you do yourself?" she protested.

"Oh, I'm goin' to sit by the fire an' smoke an' doze an' keep the fire up. I'll be all right; I've done it time an' again."

"It don't seem right to take your coat." in a distressed murmur.

"Bless your little heart, I shan't know it's off!"

Althea held out a shy hand. "You're real good to me." The phrase was a staid New England one, but the voice glowed with all the generous warmth of the plains.

The stranger he'd her hand, hardened by rough work, in a firm grasp, smiling on her with his clear, pleasant eyes.

"We're pretty well acquainted as 'tis, but I'd like to know your name."

"Althea Mary Penton."

"I'm John Sears."

Without another word of good night, Althea curled up under his coat. She told herself, blinking big eyes at the fire, that she could never sleep in that strange bed, the rush of the river beating up into her ears, yet soon she saw the flames as long rays up to the ceiling, dancing now in green, now in blue whirls of color, and John Sears a long, long ways off and monstrous large, piling on fresh wood, and heard his voice across a void faint and dim:

"Warm enough?"

Then suddenly some one was calling loudly: "Althea! Althea! Wake up!"

She sat bolt upright in a pool of sunshine, to see the sheriff standing in the doorway, the sun making a sort of halo behind his head.

"Nothin' wrong," he assured her frightened stare. "Just routin' you up. The stream's down right some an' we can cross it. Your folks'll be wantin' to see you."

"Oh, yes, let's hurry." She scrambled to her feet, very stiff and sore in the bones. "Why, what's the matter?" for he was dripping to the waist.

"Only a little wettin'," he explained easily. "Sam an' I discovered your boat caught in the rocks across from here an' we went over for it. Let's see," he talked on cheerfully. "As we haven't either of us much prinkin' to do, we can go right 'long.'"

Althea pulled at her scant skirts with both hands. "My—shoes!"

"Sam'll do the trick this time." He smiled, his eyes considerably lifted above the floor. "You've rode him before, so you won't be frightened."

The slithering scramble down the rocks, and the crossing in the boat, Sam towed behind, did not take long.

"Now, then," John told her, "we'll jog off to Ol' Man Herndon's. He'll

give us breakfast an' a horse. His cabin ain't more'n two miles from here."

He pulled the boat up on the shore, first bending down to pick up something.

"Glad to see 'em?" He handed her the shoes, heavy, and clumsy, and worn.

Although they were rigid with wet, she crowded her feet into them ruthlessly.

"Ready?" The sheriff was mounted and holding out his hand to her. Upon his horse he seemed strange and official. "Put your foot on mine. *Now.*"

She was on the saddle in front of him, riding off toward the sunrise. The long two miles—for Sam went slowly—she never spoke a word. Her body was bone weary, but it was more the trouble of her mind that kept her silent. This was a cruel man, using the law to cloak his oppression, and yet she could not think of him without a soft warmth creeping up around her heart, and the grasp of his arm around her waist made her throb with a sort of fear that yet was queerly delicious.

Old Man Herndon gave them a hot breakfast cooked by himself, and offered his best horse.

"Two, Mr. Herndon," smiled the sheriff. "I want you should ride over with this lady to her father. It's not such a terrible ways by land."

"Ain't you comin'?" Althea could have bitten off her tongue the next moment.

"I got to ride on about my business," he told her with the dark look that subject always brought. "I'd like to give you into your father's hands, myself. I hope you won't get sick from this."

"I'm tough as a nut. It takes more'n that to flax me out," she answered crisply. He should not think her wholly feeble and foolish.

He smiled down on her from Sam's back, and even her pride could not take the look as other than kindly. Her hurt quieted, she smiled up at him, a smile all innocence and shy sweetness.



"Don't hang him!" she implored. "Let him go! He's innocent! I know he's innocent!"

A touch of red glowed an instant in the sheriff's weathered cheeks.

"It was a right smart jaunt, though, for a tenderfoot."

Luckless word! Althea's eyes gleamed with a pale shine, her soft little mouth tightened to a line.

"My father'll want to thank you for helpin' me, an' my brothers," in a cool formality. "You'll be comin' over to the ford some day to see 'em?" The tone fairly threatened, "Don't you dare!"

"Oh, yes, I'll be round some day." He was quite undashed. "Good-by."

Althea perforce must lay her hand in his in that viselike grip. Old Herdon watched the sheriff lope off down the trail to Foxboro.

"Smart boy, John," he grinned. "Queer them brothers is so different."

Althea whirled a startled face to him. "The other's a bad fellow?" She could not be more explicit.

The ranchman nodded. "Bad as they grow, I guess. Hard on John, but he'll see him through, somehow. You an' me start now, eh?"

It always seemed to Althea, looking

back upon that summer of thick events, that she herself had brought them plunging down on her head, as an incautious shout will bring down an avalanche in the Alps, by her own decision taken in the sad spring twilight, brooding on her doorsill.

The night of her return, when her relieved family were once more gathered into the cabin after their distracted hunt for her, her brother Ben forged the next link in the chain of her will to go back East. Ben, in the course of his search for his sister, had come across a man just returned from a journey to the new railroad, still hundreds of miles away.

"But the road's a-comin' 'long, lickety-cut, McVane says, an' the Secord brothers are goin' to start a stage route to meet it."

"Where he claim it'll run?" inquired old Penton.

"'Long by Horsehead River, through Coopertown, an' over Bare Hills, an' like that."

"Why, that ain't more'n forty mile from this very house."

"No, sir. An' McVane, he cal'lates they'll have it organized in a month."

"Well, well, this country's growin' up big 'nough to vote." The old man rose lumberingly for bed. "Some excellent, good folks in it, too, for all the lawlessness o' parts o' it. That young fellow that cared for my little girl last night, he's one o' 'em." He laid his hand with clumsy tenderness on her head, rubbing the hair the wrong way into her eyes. "You say he was a stranger, daut?"

"Yes, sir. He ain't one that lives anywheres round these parts." Althea hid away under his hand. She had kept secret from her family both the name of her rescuer and her earlier acquaintance with him.

"Singular he didn't give you his name," pondered Seth. "You too mazed to ask it?"

His sister coughed hollowly.

"There, there." The old man was full of alarms. "You got a cold onto you; you ain't fit to set up another minute," and he swept her off to bed.

In her comfortable bed, Althea lay awake longer than on the floor of the deserted cabin, flying back and forth over all the wild adventures of the twenty-four hours just gone. She had looked a bleak and lonely death in the face for hours, and yet it was not that great experience that leaped in her brain constantly; it was rather the still hour by the fire when she and the sheriff had talked together. And that fire-light companion was hounding an innocent boy to death!

"That can't be so. Louie got hold of it wrong," she told herself, watching, through the widened chink in the logs that made her window, a great star wheel and burn in a blue-black sky. "But that ol' ranchman said his brother was a bad fellow, an' that he'd see him through." What that might mean in this land of wonders, moral as well as material, she dared not reason out. "It's an awful wild, reckless country," she grieved.

Then the star danced before her eyes. "The new stage route! It'll take me home. Father can drive me to it in a day an' then I can get the cars! Home! Home!" She clapped her hands in the dark; she longed to leap out of bed, to run down to her singing rock and sing her heart away. A cold touch like a finger brushed her face; back there she would never again see Sheriff John. Well, what of that?

Weary of this coil called life, she turned on her side and slept, her face in her dreams half frowning, half smiling.

The next day a stranger rode up to the ranch, fed his horse, and ate dinner with them. He was a shy man who cast down his eyes whenever Althea offered him anything and who answered every question in the fewest words. Later, however, she heard him out at the barn talking in a steady growl to her brothers, whose quick questions told her the conversation held news. She wandered out there herself, to find the stranger stricken dumb, and in pity to him and to her brothers, she went back to feed her chickens. An

occasional word reached her to which she paid no heed. Suddenly a higher note bore the talk to her:

"The sheriff was headed for Seven Days when——"

Again the voice sank. She strained her ears vainly till on another rising note she heard:

"You understand it's his own brother all the——" Then a mumble.

Her brother Ben's question reached her: "He's after this Spanish Louie, though, you say?"

"After him? He's burnin' the wind on his trail. John'll have Louie if he's between here an' the Pacific. He——" The stranger caught sight of Althea's dress as she crept nearer the barn and again dropped his voice.

Althea roamed away down to the edge of the river, longing, yet dreading, to question her brothers about this story. It was so unbelievably ugly, yet from the four quarters of the sky it was confirmed. She sat all through supper, alert for its rehearsal to her father. Her brothers, after their habit in any matter of business, were entirely silent before her. She raged at their care for her feelings, but she could not force herself out of her own secretiveness.

Days, weeks passed. The faint, elusive charm of spring had bloomed into the flushed and glorious beauty of summer. Work hummed on every ranch; few men journeyed abroad. Althea thirsted to know whether John Sears had caught Spanish Louie, and whether the jury had been fixed to convict him, or whether he had made his way to that mysterious region, the coast, and so escaped man's cruelty and the law's miscarriage. She would never ask, for fear she should betray her own connection in the affair, and no one ever offered news.

The spring, which had begun with long storms and the flood, had died away into a rainless summer. Day after day dawned in a sky of burning blue to die away into a night of breathless stillness and blazing stars. The river shrank until the ford was only a glaze of water over the rocks, and the

spring dwindled to a trickle. The days were one long glare of lurid, remorseless heat; the nights brought no wind to stir the dead air, only the surcease of the brutality of the sun that bored deep into the brain. Althea, her brown skin a queer pallor, her eyes startlingly large in her thin face, moved from the spring to her flowers, and from the oven to the washtub with a languid persistence to which her mind beat out a measure, tuneless, unchanging, yet potent magic for weariness:

"I'm goin' home! I'm goin' home!"

In the twilight she sat on the steps, heedless now of any audience, singing her very heart out. And though the words were other to the ears of her family, to herself they were always: "I'm goin' home!"

Her father rode in late one night, and ate his supper gloomily.

"Awful tejus weather," Ben suggested to him as a cause of his heaviness.

"Can't remember such a spell since we settled here," Seth added.

The old man turned his somber look upon them. "Fire in the forests beyond the Loup."

"Lordy, that's bad!" the lively Ben.

"All hands pray for rain."

Seth watched his father in silence.

"We needn't backfire *our* grass yet," was the old man's answer to the look.

"What do you mean about our grass, father?" Althea stopped in her work of clearing the table.

"Why, daughter, when a prairie fire's comin', the only way to meet it an' save your cabin is to burn a great, wide stretch round it so when the fire comes up, it won't have nothin' to feed on."

"But won't the cabin catch fire?"

"Not if your wind's right, an' you beat out the sparks lively."

The girl sighed in silence, realizing, yet not understanding, the anxiety of her men. Presently she came over close to the old man.

"Father"—she laid her hand on his shoulder—"you ever sorry you came 'way out here?"

The answer was on the instant: "Never had a moment's repentance." Then in a dim groping of sympathy

toward his little girl, "Dautie, don't you fret. There ain't no danger. We'll get rain 'fore any fire can reach us."

Althea kissed his forehead tenderly. She was not of a gallant courage, but she could hide her hurts in patience.

The next day a tawny haze hung low in the west, and a faint acrid odor tinged the air. Her father and brothers said nothing more of fires, an ominous sign in them.

The next morning at daylight some one knocked loudly on the door. Althea was out of bed and opening it before the others were even awake. All night dull, dreary dreams had troubled her. Now her hurrying thought was "Forest fires!"

Their nearest neighbor, George King, from the other side of the ford, sat his horse by the door, holding his whip ready for another blow.

"Mornin'. My woman's ailin' an' the baby, too," was his greeting.

"Oh, I'm sorry! What's the matter with Lucy?"

"Heat, I reckon. She ain't so bad; it's the baby. Mornin', Mr. Penton. I'm ridin' for the doctor. My wife's sick an' I want your girl should go stay with her while I'm gone."

"Where's doc to?"

"Lord knows. At Seven Days, I hope. How long 'fore you can get there, Althea?"

She knew this was no hour to delay; a frontier woman didn't send for the doctor every time she had a headache. She summoned a smile to encourage the worried husband, and told him cheerfully: "Soon as I'm dressed an' can get my menfolks a mite o' breakfast."

"Terr'ble hot, ain't it?" The ranchman fanned himself with his hat. The dawn was muffled in a kind of gray heat.

"Some of it's due to the fires ragin' round here," the old man answered. "Anxious times these."

"Oh, them won't come a-nigh us!" The ranchman was by nature an optimist.

Althea gathered up all the simple remedies she owned, put a loaf of

bread, a roll of butter, and a jar of milk in a basket, and was driven over to the King cabin, her father returning home at once.

The sallow, hollow-eyed woman, a pitiful creature wrapped in a patchwork quilt and rocking a poor little baby, gave a thin cry of pleasure when Althea, smiling and strong, walked in.

"Powerful poor luck I've had all summer—chills an' fever all the time. An' to-day, baby, he's took down, but I 'low we'll rastle through, now some one's come to help out."

"I'd like to know why not!" Althea looked the courage she felt in the face of household perils long habit had trained her to brave.

She bathed and fed the baby, sang him to sleep, dosed his mother with a brew of herbs heated on the stove, and coaxed her into bed.

"My laws, if this ain't revivin'!" sighed the sick woman as she watched Althea's broom fly over the floor, then saw her hang wet sheets about the room to cool the atmosphere. "Ain't it the awfulest spell o' weather?"

"Looks like we were goin' to get rain at last." Althea glanced out of the window. "There's a big black cloud yonder an' the wind's risin'." She did not tell the sick woman that another cloud was rolling in on them, dun, shot underneath with orange.

Lucy and the baby both slept soundly, soothed by the medicine. Althea slipped out to study the vast and lonely world around the cabin. The prairie seemed to gasp for breath in dry, stagnant heat, and the sun shone through the strange cloud like a shriveled ball of copper. The trees behind the cabin swayed with the rising wind. Althea was no woodsman, but she needed only her five wits to tell her two things—that the cabin lay in the track of that menacing cloud, but that the wind would beat it back if only there were time for that mighty savior to grow strong.

What could she do to help? The prairie stretched away from the cabin treeless till it reached a fringe of forest to the southeast. Beyond that forest,



She waited, tense, rigid. Some hidden whirlpool snatched at the boat, twisted it away from the island, and shoved it ahead.

the sky was banded by the murky cloud. She remembered her father's words about a backfire if the wind was right. She stood still, trembling greatly; then, with her eyes strained like a hunted animal's, she darted for the barn. As she ran, she saw over her shoulder a zigzag of fire, like lightning, shoot through the cloud; some tall tree afire.

Headlong, now, as the fire itself, she yet steadied her brain long enough to remember King's three horses in the pasture below the barn and to lure them in by oats and salt. Then she took two buckets of water, a gunny sack from the barn, and matches, and set out. She ran as she had never run in her life down through the dry grass till she judged herself far enough from the house. Then, striking her matches, she took a straight course at right angles to the cabin, throwing the lights into the grass as she went. The dry grass blazed up instantly. The breeze

caught the flame, puffed it here and there capriciously, then beat it slowly away from the cabin.

Althea could not stay to watch. Other work shouted for her. Little runnels of fire, too low for the hand of the wind, spread out toward the cabin; a stunted bush crackled into flame; a spark dropped like a live coal. To these Althea rushed, beating them out with her wet sack, back to one or other of her buckets to dampen the sack, off again to the next danger. Over and over she repeated this, till the blackened line nearest her no longer offered any food for a blaze and the cabin was safe from her backfire at least.

Dripping with sweat, panting, her lips cracked with heat, shaking with exhaustion, she sank to her knees to watch her blaze go roaring off toward the forest, now tipped with light in many places. A new terror gripped her heart till she caught her breath in

agony. Her line of fire would spread at both ends! She must backfire there, too.

She sprang to her feet, alive now with that intense energy that knows neither fear nor weariness. She ran for her half-empty bucket. As she bent for it, she saw a figure rush by her, a bucket in either hand. Could Lucy— No, it was a man. George must have found the doctor some place nearer than Seven Days. No matter how he got there, he was home to help. Wordless, they raced for the untouched prairie at the right of her line of fire, lighted it, then beat it out again, leaving only a band of ashes for the on-coming flames. They had the wind, now blowing strongly, as an ally, but they toiled frightfully, stamping out sparks with their feet, breaking off twisted switches of bushes, beating down the line of fire.

They worked without a word or a glance at one another. Althea had long ago ceased to think, or hope, or even feel. Her eyes burned like coals, her skin was stiff as parchment, her tongue hung over her blackened lips.

One instant they waited to see the fire stretch out its lustful fingers to their cleared zone, clutch impotently, and fall away, baffled, then in a common understanding they raced off to the other end of the line. Althea staggered like a broken creature as she ran; once she fell to her knees, plunging forward with all her weight. Her companion dragged her up to her feet and pulled her along by her arm.

Another man was at this end, stamping and beating in a frenzy of effort. The fire had more headway there; still the three of them made a brave brigade.

"We've done it!" The strange man's voice was a husky croak. He watched the fire crawl away like a cowed beast. "If it's a big enough belt burned, we've saved this cabin."

The three sank down on the ground, drained of all strength, and watched with lackluster eyes the wind herd the flames at a swinging gallop across toward the now blazing forest. The sky was black as night, picked out with

the stars of sparks; a great drop of water fell hissing into the ashes, then another.

"Thank God!" muttered the stranger. "We'll make it through! I'll go see if my patients have died o' the heat."

Pulling himself to his feet, he plowed heavily up to the cabin. Althea sagged forward in a huddled heap. She heard the doctor say they were safe, but she cared not one whit; she felt like a charred bone. The other man drew himself up close to her and made a back of his chest for her to lean against. She dropped her whole weight against him in a stupor of exhaustion. He bathed her face and hands with water from one of the buckets and squeezed some drops between her lips.

"It ain't whisky *this* time," he laughed in a thick voice.

Althea raised her lids, pricked with a dim surprise far back in the corners of her brain.

"You here, John Sears?"

"Lucky for you, wasn't it?" He pressed his cheek down on her hair, loosened in a tangle of little curls.

Althea strove to remember that he was the sheriff of her county, that she had never seen him but twice in her life, and that at home—that is, in a world of proper living—girls did not rest in the arms of any men not their brothers. She was so abysmally weary! Perhaps she was dying, in which case nothing particularly mattered.

"I'll bet you'd have won out alone." He rubbed his cheek up and down her hair caressingly.

Althea pulled herself away shakily, and stared at his blackened face and red-rimmed eyes.

"Do I look as awful as you?" she asked with a dim interest.

"You look like the sweetest little girl west o' the Mississippi!" John Sears cried strongly through his swollen lips, "an' the bravest!"

She thought she would rather the fire swept back on her to burn her to ashes than that he should see her cry

again, and straightway tears ran channels in her sooty face, sobs shook her tumultuously.

"I haven't—cried—but two times—in years," she sobbed out agonizingly, sure that he believed her drowned in tears half her days.

"You let me take you up to Lucy King; she'll give you somethin'." He stood up and held out his arms to carry her.

"No!" with tired courage.

"You're 'bliged to let me, tender-foot," with a laugh, pointing.

She followed his gesture, to see her shoes burned into holes. She would not however, let him do more than hold her arm. The rain, beginning in a few drops, now quickened to a great downpour. The land was saved.

Lucy King had endured the heat and the terror with the stoic courage of pioneer women. The doctor said both she and the baby would be better now the heat was broken. George had met the sheriff not far below Blue Rock Ford, had told him his errand, and charged him, if he met with the doctor, to speed him along. John had crossed the doctor's trail and ridden with him to King's cabin, as it lay in his course. They had reached it racing their horses to head off the fire.

They watched the steam rise from the smoking land till the rain hid all the world outside. Althea cooked dinner, the two men hindering her in a blundering good will of helpfulness. Then the doctor rode off in the sluicing downpour. The sheriff saddled his horse and started in another direction—with only a quiet good-by. But Althea, watching him from the open door, saw him wheel at the barn and ride back close to the cabin. He dismounted, throwing the reins over Sam's head, and came to the doorstep.

"Where's Lucy?" he whispered.

"She an' baby are asleep there," nodding toward the little inner room.

"You rest you, too, won't you?" He had her hand in his now. "You 'fraid to stay alone to-night?"

"Yes." She could not say the thing that was not, even to keep his respect.

"But I guess one o' the boys will ride over at dark."

"If I could only stay myself!" He struck his hand against the door. "It's always some drivin' business with me."

She winced. "You ever catch up that Louie?" It had said itself.

"It's him I'm ridin' after now—at least a word of him. I reckon it's cold scent by now, an' not much use, but I'm bound to follow it."

"You're set an' determined to get that poor boy?" Her thin, tired face quivered with eagerness to have him explain this apparent contradiction in his nature, so kind, so cruel.

"Why, child, I am the sheriff!"

"Yes, but they say he didn't do it, that you're after him out of—"

"What?" sharp as the click of a gun.

"Revenge." She grasped at the first word, even a wrong one, in the crowd that thronged her brain. "They say because your brother—" She could not finish under his glance.

Red blazed in his cheeks, even seemed to have crept into his eyes. "They say! They think they've got me comin' an' goin'." "Oh, his *brother* gets off scot-free—that's one gang. 'He's houndin' Louie like he hated him worse'n death'—that's another. But I did my duty as I understood it then, an' I'll do my duty as I understand it now, an' that's all the vindication they'll ever get from me!"

His voice, still low, cut like steel; his face was hard set. He looked all law and justice now.

"An' you think I'm that kind o' a brute, no feelin's of a man in me!" A spasm wrrenched his face. "Don't know any bad yourself, but ready to believe any lie comes your way. An' I—I—wanted you for my wife! Not now!" He flung her hand from him, leaped upon Sam, and was gone.

Althea lay down on the lounge by the window, where the fast-cooling air blew in, and said to herself, as she closed her eyes in the sleep her drugged body demanded: "I shan't see him again, ever, ever, an' I'm glad I won't! He's like all the rest o' this cruel country! I hate him."

"Seems like you ain't picked up very smart since you came back from Kings'," Althea's father told her one night a week later, as they sat at supper. "You look consid'ble peaked."

"I'm all right, father," she told him, forcing a smile. "Only this is a kind o' a lonesome country for women."

"'Tis so," the old man agreed unexpectedly. "An' you was one that always valued your mates, too."

"I miss 'em, an' sisters an' grandmother, an' church, an' my music, an' —" She could not finish.

"Great King Agrippy!" Ben smote his knee. "I like to forgot I met up with Joe Trainton an' he gave me this for you."

He handed his sister a letter received at the office two weeks before, and carried about by one person after another till it had finally reached its owner.

"It's from Uncle Almer Ryder," she told them as she read the pages, "an' Aunt Althea Mary's dead."

"Well, well, well!" the old man sighed. "She's been a patient sufferer a good many years now. She's released for a better world."

"Listen, father, boys!" Althea looked from one to the other in amaze. "She's left me a legacy, because I'm her name child."

"I ain't surprised. She set by you, Althea Mary did."

"What is it?" the more practical brothers asked.

"A thousand dollars!" It was a great fortune.

"What'll you do with it?"

"Prove up on land beyond the ford?"

Althea stood like a priestess vowed to holy uses. "I'll go home an' take singin' lessons."

The boys laughed; such a castle in Spain! But the old man said solemnly:

"So you shall, if so be I can ever spare you."

Althea fed her chickens and housed them safe from hawks and owls. She was dizzied by her good fortune.

"Now, I shan't ever even think of that sheriff again!" she said proudly, then with angry insistence, "I don't think of him now. Why should I?

I'm goin' home where men are very different from him!"

She sighed and all the gayety died out of her face, leaving it queerly blank. "Likely enough it won't seem the same now, even back there."

Autumn's brilliant touch was on tree and bush and prairie when one day Althea's father offered to take her to Seven Days "tradin'." It was a poor enough town, but the county seat, and the largest place the region knew, and it boasted of a store. Althea, who rarely left the cabin, was in great excitement. The summer's languor had left her, yet to the old man she was not the same—more restless, more eager for change. As they drove away, Seth called after them:

"I got a wager goin' mighty things'll happen this trip."

Althea laughed. "I got one, too," although she did not mean it. She had begun to lose some of her faith in the ultimate happiness coming to her; things seemed to lag or go so contrarily.

Yet there, in the Seven Days mail bag, was fate!

"Your eyes are younger than mine," her father told her, handing over a letter.

She read it, her voice trembling until the words would hardly come—how sister Eliza, the writer of the letter, was anxious over her husband, who had a cough, and how the doctor said he shouldn't try to stand another New England winter, but if he could, should go West some place to a dry climate; how they had found a purchaser for the farm, were packing their belongings, and were coming out to father and Althea, and the boys, to live with them and help work their ranch.

"Good land o' Goshen! The Ol' Farago! Israel in Egypt!" Old Penton, stirred from his deep calm, blew off the steam of his amazement in a crackle of strange oaths; then, gripping the situation firmly, answered:

"Well, I'll be proper pleased to see Eliza an' Joel. She's my first-born

child, an' good as a mother to watch out for you!"

Althea laughed softly. "Father, you'd think I was in tiers."

"You said yourself 'twas a terr'ble lonesome country for a woman. Eliza'll company you now all day."

Althea's eyes shone like far-off stars; in dear-bought wisdom she bridled her tongue. Her father would have turned stonily obstinate under two shocks in one day. She must keep her great project quiet. But the glorious simplicity of it! All the pieces of it fitting together like parts of a mosaic—the stage route, the new railroad, the money inherited by her, the coming of her sister to take her place in the house. Her heart sang as the buckboard bore her to the hotel—a term of courtesy, merely—where she and her father were to stay. Fortune's wheel had whirled the dull pattern of her life out and brought up this shimmering, golden web. Her feet clacked out on the floor of the wagon a gay march toward the East; her voice rippled up and down the scale of all harmonies soundlessly in her throat. She was like a creature ravished out of herself.

"Feelin' big as dogs now sister's a-comin'," her father chuckled, sharing her anticipation.

She squeezed the hand fisted on his knee, but said not a word.

They sat on the porch of the barn-like building called The Spa, while the first set of diners filled the dining room. There an old-timer, known to both, joined them.

"Kind o' busy week in Seven Days," he remarked sociably. "Stage route opened through it an' trial goin' on same time. Come to hear the case?"

"No," said Penton. "What is it?"

"Biggest thing since Spanish Louie cut an' run. Storekeeper robbed more'n month ago. Folks all 'greed the thief had lit out permanent, but sheriff corralled him."

"Likely fellow, our sheriff."

"Yes, sir, John's smart, an' gritty! He's been on edge over this case, too. Bent to get the fellow because Louie cleared out."

"Folks blame him for that?"

"Well, some. There's fools everywhere, but I ask you how John could 'a' done different an' been called a human bein'?"

The girl watched him with a pale intensity, striving for each word.

"If you'll believe it, that fellow turned up at my ranch with a cock-an'-bull yarn about bein' nigh drowned in Dead River," her father led the story on a little.

"How did he escape?" Desire shook the girl's voice.

"Ain't you heard *that*? Why, John had got Louie 'long beyond Dead River—there was three o' 'em, John, Louie, an' the deputy, Dick O'Neill—when they decided they'd take the ol' trail through Broken Tooth Gap. It's been given up a good while back, 'count o' bein' so rough an' havin' a bad name in the ol' days for Injin surprises. But it's consid'ble shorter, an' so take it they would. Right in the consarnedest part o' the whole trail they plumped right into—"

"Not Injins?" in a cry from the girl.

"Injins. Sheriff had both Louie's guns, but when he see the redskins, he handed 'em back, saying—'twas Dick tol' me himself—'You shall have your chance with the rest o' us.' Then him an' Dick, they waded in to make it through, but Louie, he took his own sweet way out o' it by the route he'd come."

"An' left them to fight alone?"

"That's what, missy."

"Spanish Louie's a skunk." It was her father's heaviest condemnation.

"Urr!" The other old man spat over the rail.

"They lived—they got through—"

She was trying to put the time together, to realize that she had seen John only two days after this.

"The Injins clipped Dick in the leg an' killed his horse, but they was a half-breed set—didn't dast stand up to men like Dick an' John. John had to get Dick in to town to the doctor, an' so lost his chance to rustle after Louie."

"Did folks think J—the sheriff—"



Althea blushed a hotter red than the heat of the fire burned in her face.

ought to have kept Louie from fighting?" she cried eagerly.

"Folks is fools, I tell you. They said— Hello! What? You hollerin' to me? 'Scuse me, miss." The old-timer strode off to a man calling across the street.

"There's the sheriff now," her father said casually; "the tall one with the little fellow. Evenin', sheriff."

The young man did not glance their way till he was just beside the porch, then he looked directly at her father, taking off his hat with ceremony.

"Evenin', Mr. Penton."

"Fine day we've had."

"Fine."

He did not notice her presence. She sat still as a stone, forgetting how wonderfully she was going to sing by this

time next year, and how safe and sweet home was, remembering only how strong his arms were when he carried her up the cliff, how tender his voice when he soothed her tears.

"I guess we can go in to dinner now, father," she said in a flat voice.

The next day, while her father transacted his business, Althea shopped at the one store, explored the meager surroundings of the town, and even peeped into the courthouse, nearly empty for recess, where the jury was being drawn for the trial.

"Reckon John'll fix this jury to convict all right," a miner coming out remarked with a laugh.

"He's got to earn his salary, some sort o' ways," the other answered.

"You fellers'd sicken an' honest

horse!" a tall ranchman joined in angrily. "He give Louie a chance because he was a human bein', an' he hunted him down because he was sworn by the law he will."

"Louie's safe 'nough," the first speaker answered mildly. "Kemp Martin saw the fellow that got him off the coast to South America."

The men passed on, leaving Althea standing in the middle of the road, hot and shaking. Her journey to town was spoiled. She longed to escape from a place where the very air echoed to his name. She could not understand what these men meant. Why did they covertly accuse the sheriff of having let his prisoner slip of set purpose? The old man had said something like that, too. Yet Louie had told her he was the scapegoat. She was thankful he had won freedom. That was one clear point in the queer tangle of it all.

The next morning they started at sunrise for the long drive home. Her father was full of plans for receiving Eliza and her husband, enlarging the cabin, and proving up on more land. He talked with unwonted liveliness, while Althea sat dumb beside him.

At noon they stopped at the Driver cabin for dinner. George King was there, on his way down to Seven Days.

"Subpœnaed," he grinned. "I'm witness for the county 'gain' one Samuel Brown, alias Sam Fenderson, for trespass an' robbery over to the gen'ral store o' Dow Brothers."

"Things is done in lawful ways these times," said old Mrs. Driver. "Was a time when menfolk strung each other up to the nearest tree."

"'Bliged to," her husband admonished her. "Me an' John Sears, him that was father to young John, served on more'n one committee."

"John's a good boy," King asseverated earnestly.

"Knowed him since he was no bigger'n my two hands," Mrs. Driver beamed. "His folks an' us come out over the plains in the same emigrant train. We lived neighbors back East."

"His father was the whitest man I ever knew," old Driver pronounced.

"An' his mother was a good woman, with high principles in doin' things," the old woman said.

"She must 'a' repented many times marryin' that half-breed," remarked King.

"Spanish Louie's his father all over," said Driver. "He's been a thorn in John's side always."

"Looks innocent as a baby, an' him stabbin' poor ol' Charlie Claghorn in the back, after tolin' off his young wife, too."

Driver cast a warning glance toward Althea, sitting dumb and pale.

"It's an ugly story, mother," he warned. "Anyhow, John always acted to Louie a brother's part."

"Brother?" Althea flashed the word at them. "Spanish Louie an' John?"

"Yes, dear," answered Mrs. Driver. "John's mother married a kind o' Spanish fellow—"

"Half-breed," from her husband.

"—after John Sears died. Then she died—that Spaniard treated her awful, poor girl—an' John looked out for Louie. He always hated John, though he got nothin' but kindness from him, an' they said he raved like a maniac when John arrested him, tellin' him he'd betrayed his own blood."

"There's some say that, too," King commented.

"An' some make out 'twas all a yarn 'bout the Injins bein' so fierce, to give Louie a chance to quit out o' it because he was his brother," Althea's father put in.

Their host smote the table with his fist heavily.

"An' I tell you ol' John Sears was the squarest man west o' the Mississippi, an' his son's as square as him every bit!"

Althea rode home in a gloom as deep as the October twilight.

"I'm tired out. I got to go to bed," she told her family.

In bed she lay with clenched hands and tightly pressed lids repeating: "There're fools everywhere. I'm one," until from the sheer monotony of it she dropped asleep.

For two days Althea endured the

shame of her cruel judgment, then, impatient of pain, she seized upon release. She wrote a letter, short to the point of crudity, addressed it to Sheriff John Sears, and waited until a messenger should pass. The letter said:

I did not know Spanish Louie was your brother. I am ashamed I misjudged you. You acted right.

ALTHEA.

Chance favored her. In another couple of days a miner happened along who promised to take it to Seven Days, the sheriff's home.

Weeks slipped away. Eliza and her husband might come any day, now. Althea had reasoned and coaxed till her father had consented that in the spring she might go East.

It was the evening of the victory—bitter chill, and the edge of dark. Althea ran out to house her chickens, cover her plants, and gather the last autumn blossoms.

"I'm goin' home!" she whispered, and shut her lips upon a sob.

A horseman rode splashing into the ford, and up the hill. He threw the reins over his horse's head and sprang down.

"I said you were the sweetest little girl this side sunrise." He caught both her hands. In one of his he held a dingy envelope. "This found me last night. I've come a-runnin' ever since."

Althea's face in the dim light was all eyes.

"I never really believed you were what he said—not in my heart I didn't, John."

"Drop it, dear! Don't let's poison this night, our night, with it." He drew her up close against him. "You goin' to love me a little bit an' come make a home for me?"

The girl bent backward out of his hold. "I ain't a Western woman. I don't know this life out here, an' I ain't fitted to it," she said.

"There, dear, there." He did not understand. "You've had some awful propositions to face up to, but you won't any more. I'll take care o' you." He bent low over her, whispering in

a voice deep with love: "I'll take care o' you, sweetheart."

"You said the pioneer women were big—an' noble."

"So are you. Wasn't the first time I ever saw you when you were half scared to death, poor little girl, yet chasin' that on'ery colt?" He laughed and kissed her soft hair.

"Let me go, please."

At her tone he loosened his arms. "What is it, Althea?" he said. "Don't you love me, just a little?"

"I want to make sure it's enough," she answered strangely.

She leaned against the fence, apart from him.

"It's my voice! It's home!" She whispered to the stars pricking out in the velvet-dark sky. "Can I give them up forever? Can I give them up an' never let him know the sacrifice?" Then aloud passionately: "Eastern women are brave, too. They can do things—an' say it's all in the day's work."

He ran to her. "What is it, darlin'? You're brave as a little lion, if that's what's worryin' you."

She flung her hands out, fluttering the fingers as if she were letting something loose into the night.

"Good-by," she cried softly, "good-by. You're lost in the prairies."

"What is it?" he cried again in fear, of what he could not tell. "You'll love the West right soon when you have a home of your own—our home."

"I love it now," deeply. "It's my own home right this minute—for I've made it so." She put her hands up around his neck.

He could not understand, but he held her close in his arms, murmuring soft little sounds of love.

"Don't you fret over your courage, sweetheart." He smoothed the hair off her forehead. "You've got every brand o' grit that's goin'."

"An' one that ain't goin'." She laughed out in a golden bubble of sound at her own secret little joke.

John laughed, too, and the note of their laughter ran happily up to the cabin, bringing old Penton to the door.



THE OTHER FELLOW

By Edwin L. Sabin

WATCHING the other fellow occupies considerable time in daily life. Usually he seems to have something that we haven't, but want, and we wonder why and how he got it.

I know; certainly I know. Haven't I scoffed, many a time, at the crowd of idlers who, out of a job, stand about watching the other fellows excavating for an office building? And haven't I gone along, in superior way, mentally commenting on the other fellow who whirls past in his automobile, when I must walk? Oh, I guess we're all tarred with the same stick.

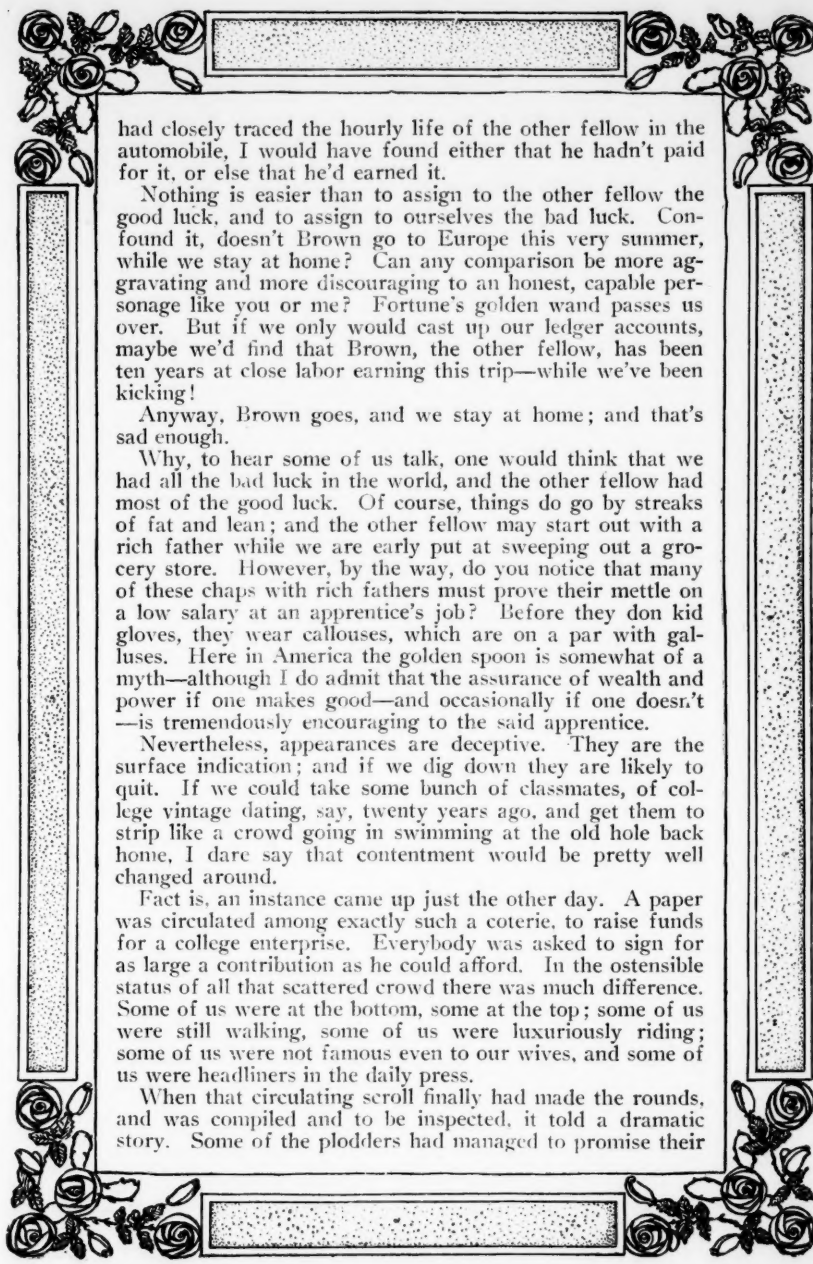
Meanwhile, the other fellow is watching us, and wondering.

Believe me, as a rule the other fellow doesn't amount to much. He is just about as ordinary as we are, and plays in just the same hard luck. If prosperity and happiness weren't comparative, we wouldn't watch him, except in natural and legitimate competition. And as for that, a great many successful business men and business women peg right ahead, regardless of the other fellow, their rival; and they appear to get there.

Doubtless we've all had the experience of hoisting the other fellow into the faces of Mr. or Mrs. Merchant or Doctor or Landlord, by the assertion: "But, listen! The other fellow does so and so," or "says so and so"; and having him, or her, smilingly reply: "Ah, indeed? I've no doubt, but I can't pay attention to that. I have my own system, and do my very best with that, regardless of what the other fellow is doing."

This sometimes is an aggravating independence, but down in our hearts we admire it. It is the right kind of competition, after all. If only more such competition existed, there wouldn't be any trusts; and there wouldn't be so much shilly-shallying and backbiting and wasteful small talk in private life.

I suppose that if the idler crowd watching the other fellows shovel dirt for the skyscraper, and figuring that these were on a good pay roll when their equals or betters weren't, had scattered out, hunting hard for any kind of work, the work would have been forthcoming; and I suppose that if I



had closely traced the hourly life of the other fellow in the automobile, I would have found either that he hadn't paid for it, or else that he'd earned it.

Nothing is easier than to assign to the other fellow the good luck, and to assign to ourselves the bad luck. Confound it, doesn't Brown go to Europe this very summer, while we stay at home? Can any comparison be more aggravating and more discouraging to an honest, capable personage like you or me? Fortune's golden wand passes us over. But if we only would cast up our ledger accounts, maybe we'd find that Brown, the other fellow, has been ten years at close labor earning this trip—while we've been kicking!

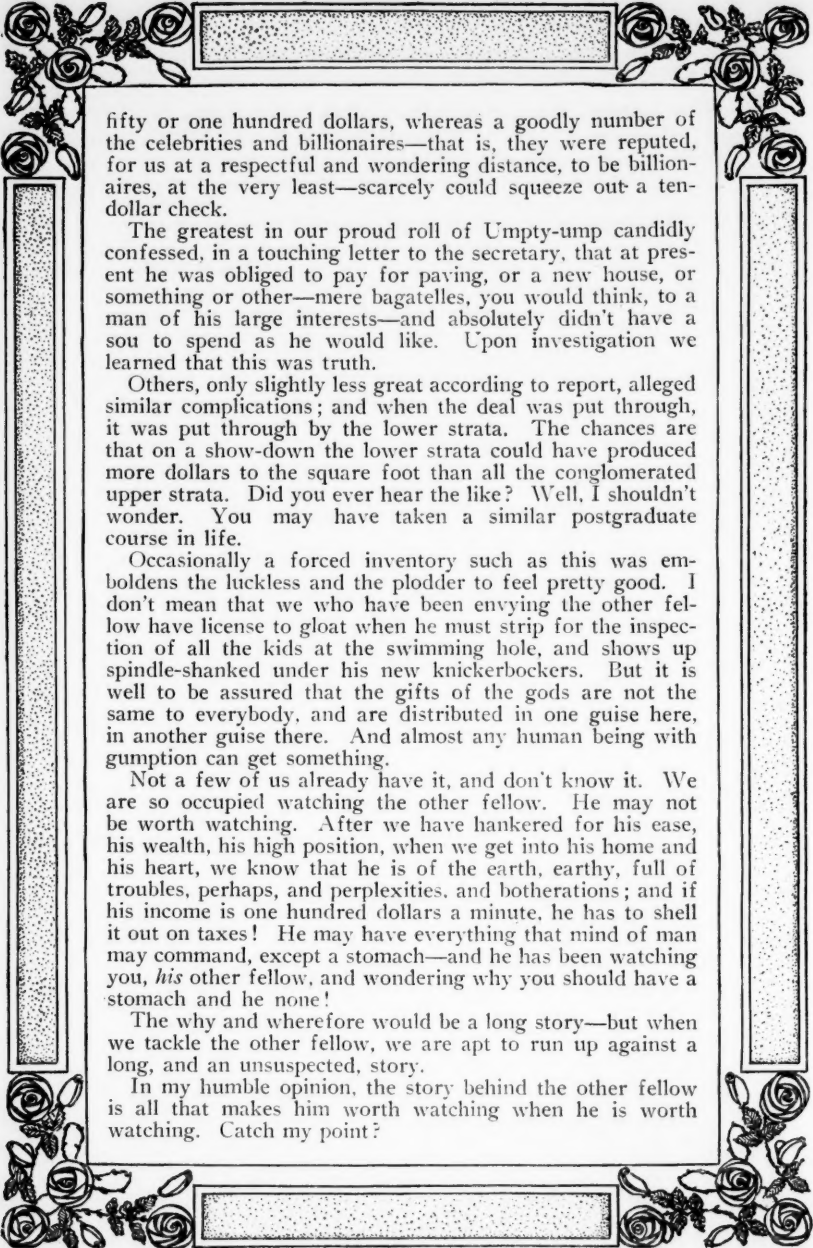
Anyway, Brown goes, and we stay at home; and that's sad enough.

Why, to hear some of us talk, one would think that we had all the bad luck in the world, and the other fellow had most of the good luck. Of course, things do go by streaks of fat and lean; and the other fellow may start out with a rich father while we are early put at sweeping out a grocery store. However, by the way, do you notice that many of these chaps with rich fathers must prove their mettle on a low salary at an apprentice's job? Before they don kid gloves, they wear callouses, which are on a par with gal-luses. Here in America the golden spoon is somewhat of a myth—although I do admit that the assurance of wealth and power if one makes good—and occasionally if one doesn't—is tremendously encouraging to the said apprentice.

Nevertheless, appearances are deceptive. They are the surface indication; and if we dig down they are likely to quit. If we could take some bunch of classmates, of college vintage dating, say, twenty years ago, and get them to strip like a crowd going in swimming at the old hole back home, I dare say that contentment would be pretty well changed around.

Fact is, an instance came up just the other day. A paper was circulated among exactly such a coterie, to raise funds for a college enterprise. Everybody was asked to sign for as large a contribution as he could afford. In the ostensible status of all that scattered crowd there was much difference. Some of us were at the bottom, some at the top; some of us were still walking, some of us were luxuriously riding; some of us were not famous even to our wives, and some of us were headliners in the daily press.

When that circulating scroll finally had made the rounds, and was compiled and to be inspected, it told a dramatic story. Some of the plodders had managed to promise their



fifty or one hundred dollars, whereas a goodly number of the celebrities and billionaires—that is, they were reputed, for us at a respectful and wondering distance, to be billionaires, at the very least—scarcely could squeeze out a ten-dollar check.

The greatest in our proud roll of Umpty-ump candidly confessed, in a touching letter to the secretary, that at present he was obliged to pay for paving, or a new house, or something or other—mere bagatelles, you would think, to a man of his large interests—and absolutely didn't have a sou to spend as he would like. Upon investigation we learned that this was truth.

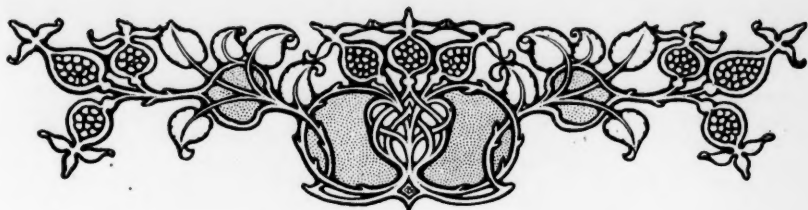
Others, only slightly less great according to report, alleged similar complications; and when the deal was put through, it was put through by the lower strata. The chances are that on a show-down the lower strata could have produced more dollars to the square foot than all the conglomerated upper strata. Did you ever hear the like? Well, I shouldn't wonder. You may have taken a similar postgraduate course in life.

Occasionally a forced inventory such as this was emboldens the luckless and the plodder to feel pretty good. I don't mean that we who have been envying the other fellow have license to gloat when he must strip for the inspection of all the kids at the swimming hole, and shows up spindle-shanked under his new knickerbockers. But it is well to be assured that the gifts of the gods are not the same to everybody, and are distributed in one guise here, in another guise there. And almost any human being with gumption can get something.

Not a few of us already have it, and don't know it. We are so occupied watching the other fellow. He may not be worth watching. After we have hankered for his ease, his wealth, his high position, when we get into his home and his heart, we know that he is of the earth, earthy, full of troubles, perhaps, and perplexities, and botherations; and if his income is one hundred dollars a minute, he has to shell it out on taxes! He may have everything that mind of man may command, except a stomach—and he has been watching you, *his* other fellow, and wondering why you should have a stomach and he none!

The why and wherefore would be a long story—but when we tackle the other fellow, we are apt to run up against a long, and an unsuspected, story.

In my humble opinion, the story behind the other fellow is all that makes him worth watching when he is worth watching. Catch my point?



The Rossmore Youngest

By Marion Short

Author of "Ethel Emerges," "Divinely Tall," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAROLD THOMAS DENISON

CORNELIA looked about her with desolate eyes. They were large and brown and fierce, those eyes, constituting her sole claim to good looks. Where were Rupert, and John, and Dorothy, she wondered? Where, too, was the one who was always there, who had fed her, and bibbed her, and rocked her to sleep, and all the rest of it? Who was this unfamiliar, pale-haired young woman who idiotically waved things in front of her, mistakenly imagining such antics were entertaining? Cornelia disliked the stranger utterly. She sprawled on the sagging sofa, and kept up a succession of monotonous wails in token of her dislike. Miss Ferris—she of the drab-colored hair—gazed resentfully at that stormy little face. Living next door to Mrs. Connolly, the aunt from Coldstream who had adopted young Rupert Rossmore, she had come to Greenfields with her through mere curiosity, though ostensibly to render any service she might. She had been repenting the hasty impulse all morning.

"Just take charge of Cornelia until the bus comes for her," Mrs. Connolly had requested, eager to depart with the chosen second of the Rossmore orphans, "and then lock up. The landlord said to leave the key under the

doormat. It's too bad she's left over and has to be sent to the orphan asylum, but there ain't enough relatives to go round, and it's mighty lucky the three oldest don't have to go there, too. I reckon Eliza would feel turrible over Cornelia if she could look down from heaven and realize what's goin' on—and mebbe she can, poor soul! Who knows? But my husband says we're doin' more'n we are able to as it is, in takin' Rupert."

Since nine a. m., Miss Ferris had been waiting to be relieved of the derelict Rossmore youngest, and it was now high noon.

The ravaged interior of the sitting room presented a forlorn appearance, the relatives having already divided up Eliza Rossmore's scanty stock of furniture and carried off their several apportionments. It was as if the little domestic history had written itself to the end and then been torn away, leaving only the blank and defaced covers of the book to hint at what the story had been.

"Stop that unearthly noise, you naughty child! My head is bursting! It's almost time for the last train to Coldstream, anyhow. I'll run away and leave you if you don't hush!" And Miss Ferris stamped an impatient foot at the

small perpetrator of those wearisome wails.

The warning merely acted as a sort of loud pedal to Cornelia's monotonous intoning, and Miss Ferris perceived that a change of tactics was required. She foraged around in search of inspiration, and succeeded in locating a moth-eaten Teddy bear, and a worn toy harness strung with bells.

"See the funny bear, Cornelia! Oh, look, the funny bear! And I'm not going to miss my train for you, and you don't need to think I am! No wonder the neighbors all call you ugly-dispositioned! Hear the bells—jing, jing, jing! Oh, the pretty, pretty bells, you impossible child!"

"Wah—oo!"

Cornelia struck at a propitiatory bag of peppermints with an irate fist.

Her temporary guardian began to pace distractedly to and fro.

"Will they never come for her? Who could have dreamed she'd be so hateful, though I always heard she was? Oh, Cornelia, why did you do that?"

Cornelia, on the floor, whither she had landed with a terrific bump, writhed like a contortionist, screaming as if pricked by innumerable pins and needles. A knock coming at the door, the child's custodian relievedly deserted the small, wriggling bundle of discontent and ran hopefully to open it. But it was not the expected driver of the orphan bus who confronted her. She found herself looking into a countenance surpassed, in the disagreeable expression it wore, only by the countenance of Cornelia herself.

"I am Miss Gorton." The very words seemed to wear a frown.

"I know," Miss Ferris nodded. "I've met you sometimes at church fairs." And she stepped back to allow the aristocratic visitor to enter.

The Gorton mansion was on the up slope of the hill near the crest, while the Rossmore cottage was on the down slope near the foot—a visible illustration of the difference in the social and financial status of the two families. Ten years before, Miss Georgia Gorton—daughter of Stephen Gorton, to-

bacco magnate—had been generally regarded as Greenfields' prettiest and most aristocratic young woman. It had been, therefore, an amazement to the townspeople when John Rossmore, a clerk in her father's employ, had jilted her to marry commonplace little Eliza Winters. Gossip had maintained persistently ever since that the jilting had changed Miss Gorton from a proud, but pleasant, girl into a proud and unpleasant woman, quick to anger and bitter of tongue. She had maintained a frigid and even antagonistic attitude to the Rossmores all the years they had remained her neighbors, even excluding the Rossmore children from the grassy allurements of the Gorton private park, where other youngsters played at will. Remembering all this, Miss Ferris marveled at her appearance within the Rossmore portals now.

"The screeching of that child is maddening," stated Miss Gorton, without preliminary parley. "She's annoying every one in the neighborhood. What on earth have you been doing to her?"

Miss Ferris swallowed a gasp of indignation.

"I've been waiting on her for hours, trying to amuse her and make her behave. I hope you don't imagine I've been abusing the child, Miss Gorton."

Miss Gorton hedged.

"Perhaps it was only that your methods of quieting her were calculated to irritate instead. I notice that she is perfectly quiet now. It is certainly an improvement, and I hope you'll succeed in keeping her still the rest of the day." And she started for the door.

"I'm expecting the asylum people to call for her any minute now," said Miss Ferris, also moving toward the door, "but before they come, I'd like to ask Doctor Moore to run over and take a look at Cornelia. Maybe she's so fretty because she isn't feeling well. She can't be left alone, of course, but I'll only be gone a moment." And before Miss Gorton fully awoke to her intent she was speeding, hat in hand, down the sidewalk.

Reluctantly the newcomer seated herself. It was her first opportunity for a



"Stop that unearthly noise, you naughty child! My head is bursting!"

glimpse at the interior of the humble little Rossmore home, but she scorned to take advantage of it. She had come for the reason her remarks had indicated, and she fixed her gaze determinedly on the forbidding countenance of that reason.

The reason's dark, curly hair was disheveled, an aggressive bunch of it standing hornlike above her high forehead, and she was grimy of face and garment. Curiosity kept her quiet for a moment, but her ominous scowl was beginning to return. Involuntarily, Miss Gorton scowled back at her. This seemed to interest Cornelia. Perhaps because the scowl impressed her as genuine, while the conciliatory smile of previous caretakers had not. With outstretched and sticky hands, she started suddenly in Miss Gorton's horrified direction. Pressing back her silken skirts, the caller attempted to evade the friendly, but undesirable, overture.

"Good gracious, child! Look at your fingers! Keep away from me!"

Cornelia laughed hoarsely, fell over her feet, and arose again to the pursuit of the fleeing one. She had always liked to play tag with Rupert and John and Dorothy. Why not, then, with this new and interesting being who had refreshingly and mysteriously dropped into the place of the one who was so tiresome? Joyously she wobbled after Miss Gorton on her fat and unsteady legs.

Checkmated by the battle-scarred old Rossmore rocking-chair, left behind as food for the dust heap, she flung both arms above her head, and howled anew.

Miss Gorton, still using the chair as a sort of movable fortification, crossed to the window and looked anxiously in the direction of Doctor Moore's residence, but a clump of trees shut off the view. Her predecessor must soon return, she told herself, and with a resigned sigh



"The young woman said she wanted to go for you, doctor. I could not see this baby left here all alone," she explained.

she resorted to that lady's unsuccessful tactics with equal unsuccess. She bounced the Teddy bear, rattled the bells, and descended to the lure of peppermints. Finally, removing a dainty enameled watch from its golden hook, she held it enticingly against Cornelia's ear. The child made a grab for the trinket, and before Miss Gorton could recover it, flung it from her with all her strength. It struck the edge of the mantelpiece, and the fine crystal, shattered, descended in feathery fragments to the floor.

As Miss Gorton hastily bent to recover the timepiece, Cornelia made a rush for her, and her sticky fingers buried themselves triumphantly in the hitherto unblemished skirt, then clutched in frenzied delight at the amber beads about the lady's neck. Cautiously Miss Gorton sought to loosen her hold. In vain! Cornelia clung to

the necklace as a drowning man to the proverbial straw. Her staccato shrieks of resistance played up and down the visitor's back like tiny steel hammers. Finally, unclasping the necklace, Miss Gorton left her small antagonist in full and gurgling possession. Dropping into a chair, she caught sight of a row of dirty little finger marks across the front breadth of her skirt.

Miss Gorton was painfully and irreproachably neat, and her vexation at sight of those soiled spots was intense. Nor was her exasperation softened by any poetic reflections on how different it all might have seemed had those finger marks been imprinted by the baby hands of a child of her own. Miss Gorton was not motherly, and knew it. Her emotion had to do with antipathy to smudges; nothing more or less.

"Cornelia sick—sick!" announced a wavering little voice.

Startled, Miss Gorton lifted her dejected eyelids. The great, sullen orbs of the child were fastened upon her fixedly. There were two bright red spots on her overround cheeks.

"Where is Cornelia sick?" The tone was the practical and conscientious one of the born New Englander, and had in it no touch of the personal.

The child lolled out her tongue, and put a chubby fist to the back of her neck, permitting the amber beads to slide, snakelike, from the sofa to the floor. Miss Gorton regarded her critically, then stooped and gathered the limp figure in her arms. She perceived that the child was really ill. Wondering how long it would be before the young woman who had gone for the doctor might return with him, she swayed back and forth in the old Rossmore rocking-chair, the unaccustomed burden in her lap.

The silence was broken by the shrill whistle of the local train as it neared Greenfields, and later by the rumble of its egress therefrom. Of course, Miss Gorton could not know that seated brazenly in the forward coach of that train as it left the station was Miss Felicia Ferris. The half-formed temptation to desert her post and leave Cornelia to the care of the disagreeable Miss Gorton had fully matured by the time she reached Doctor Moore's office. She had made a martyr of herself long enough, she reflected, and, after all, it was no more than Miss Gorton deserved after her unkind insinuations!

"Well, well, what have we here?"

Miss Gorton awoke from a transient doze to find Doctor Moore at her side. He had known her from childhood, and there was something in his look as he saw her sitting there with John Rossmore's child in her arms that caused her handsome face to redden.

"The young woman said she wanted to go for you, doctor. I could not see this baby left here all alone," she explained, but already he was entirely occupied in examining the aroused and whimpering Cornelia.

"So it's sore throat, eh, you big-eyed

baby owl! Kindly hold her firmly, Miss Gorton, while I flatten the tongue and take a look to see where we are." And he produced an instrument from his case.

"How long have you been holding her like this?" he inquired a few seconds later.

"Possibly twenty minutes. Why? What's the matter with her?"

"Diphtheria, and a bad case of it," he announced grimly. "I'll have to put you both under the strictest quarantine."

Before Miss Gorton could grasp the import of his dictum, there came an imperative hammering at the door, interspersed with cries of "Whoa, there, Billy!"

"So they've come for her at last!" breathed Miss Gorton, relieved.

"That's all the good it will do them!" and Doctor Moore abruptly banged the door behind him as he went to answer the summons.

Miss Gorton listened. There was some parleying, cries of "Git ep, Billy!" the creak of retreating wheels, then silence.

It was fully twenty minutes before Doctor Moore returned.

"Ran down to my office for some special remedies," he said. "It's a precious good thing I got here in time to prevent their carting the child away. A nice circumstance if she had carried infection to those tots at the asylum!"

"I suppose you'll have to make some special arrangements for her care," observed his listener; "but as for me—I'm not the least afraid of infection. I shall simply return to my home."

The doctor's medicine case snapped sharply as he closed it.

"This is an attack of malignant diphtheria. I must absolutely forbid you to leave the premises until the quarantine is lifted."

"That young woman who ran off and left me in charge here—she is the one to be quarantined, not I!" came the indignant protest.

"My wife saw Miss Ferris taking the one-o'clock train—presumably for Coldstream. I have, therefore, no con-

trol of her movements, but I have of yours. Of course, I'll find a nurse for the child as soon as possible——"

"I'll remain here until she comes," interrupted Miss Gorton, with dignity; "but after that—no! I refuse to be detained another instant."

"Try to make the best of the situation, please. I cannot permit you to endanger the health of the community by going outside."

Their two wills clashed silently for a moment, then Miss Gorton reconsidered.

"For how long must I be held a prisoner, then?"

"H'm! We'll hope for not more than fourteen days."

It was late in the afternoon when the doctor called again. He noticed with relief that Miss Gorton, whether resigned to the situation or not, had evidently decided to make the best of it. The sick child was attired in clean white garments; the windows had been arranged to admit a plentiful supply of fresh air; the remnants of furniture were dusted and set in a semblance of order.

"Haven't got on the track of a nurse yet," said the doctor; "but I've been phoning, and hope to land one before midnight."

"The child is enough of an infliction without my having to put up with a nurse," Miss Gorton flashed, to his surprise. "I am capable of doing all that is required."

"Certainly you are capable. I've seen you enough in sickness to know that. But it is expecting too much of you to——"

"No, it is not," stated the impromptu nurse decisively. "It would simply make a bad matter worse to have another woman fussing around. You will oblige me, doctor, by leaving everything in my hands."

"It shall be as you say, then. I can intrust the case to you with entire confidence, I know."

There were others, however, who did not share the doctor's complacency. Especially concerned over the plight of helpless Cornelia, left to the mercies of

the merciless, were Mrs. Connolly and Miss Ferris, of Coldstream.

"My poor sister Eliza always stood in mortal fear of Miss Gorton," Mrs. Connolly confided to her seatmate, as the hired buggy lurched along after an ancient horse toward Greenfields; "and to think of such an odd thing happenin' as Cornelia bein' quarantined and shut up alone with her. Why, if that woman got in one of her tempers, I wouldn't put it beyond her to inflict black-and-blue spots on the young one, always hatin' the Rossmore children as she has!"

Miss Ferris clucked sympathetically, and shook her head. She had never confided to Mrs. Connolly the details of that last morning with Cornelia, and was farther than ever from bestowing that confidence now. In her case, at least, shirking, and not virtue, had been its own reward! If she and not Miss Gorton had been obliged to assume the care of that dismal child in that dismal place! She shuddered, then contentedly sighed the shudder away.

"It's enough to make poor Eliza turn over in her grave," continued Mrs. Connolly, "though she ain't got rested enough from all she went through to turn I don't reckon, poor soul! But I'm goin' to see that Cornelia's treated right until she's able for the asylum. I'll stand by the poor, mean-tempered young one as long as she needs me, even if she always has seemed one too many in the family."

"I'll h 'I the horse while you go in," volunteered Miss Ferris, in terror of meeting Miss Gorton's eye and being recognized as the young woman responsible for her imprisonment; "and I won't start for home until you signal to me from the window that everything's all right."

But when Mrs. Connolly attempted to open the gate in the high picket fence, she found it locked. Lying on the walk inside were various bundles, evidently grocery supplies, left in as close proximity to the danger zone as had been deemed safe by the purveyors. Miss Ferris suggested the back gate, but in a few moments saw her friend's stout



"I'd rather see for myself how my niece is gettin' along if it's all the same to you."

figure jogging back disconsolately through the adjoining vacant lot.

"That's all padlocked, too! Bein' as she is who she is, I hate to holler out her name, but she knows perfectly well that we're out here! What do you suppose it means—her actin' like this?"

Miss Ferris hastily flattened herself against the back of the buggy seat behind the screening curtain.

"There she is now!" she whispered.

"Oh, how do, Miss Gorton?" Mrs. Connolly made a bobbing bow toward the window where that lady's tall figure was visible. "I thought I'd just drive over from Coldstream and——"

She stopped. Something in Miss Gorton's smile made her feel as if a small sour apple had suddenly lodged in her throat.

"If it concerns Cornelia, you can inquire of Doctor Moore for particulars. His office hours are not yet over, I believe."

A surge of temper arose and dislodged the apple.

"I'd rather see for myself how my niece is gettin' along if it's all the same to you. That's why I'm comin' in."

"You can't come in—the gate is locked."

"I reckon I've got enough sense to know that. How does the doctor manage?"

"I haven't heard him say."

"Jumps the fence, mebbe," observed Mrs. Connolly sarcastically.

"Perhaps." The tone was one of entire pleasantness.

"Well," exploded Mrs. Connolly, "whether he does or not, I'm not goin' to. This gate's got to be opened. I come over here on purpose to see Cornelia, and see her I will."

"Unfortunately," stated Miss Gorton, with a yawn, "we are quarantined, and you can't."

"But I'm calculatin' to stay and take

her off your hands," announced the other, hoping that this statement at least might produce a pleasant impression.

"Indeed!" The exclamation was polite, but noncommittal.

"Of course," added Cornelia's aunt conciliatingly, "it never was right that you should be asked to take care of her, anyway."

"It was an outrage," agreed Miss Gorton, and Miss Ferris, behind the buggy curtain, shivered; "but with no one of her own kin interested enough to do their duty by her, I am not blaming Cornelia."

"Blamin' her?" echoed Mrs. Connolly indignantly. "Well, I reckon not! As if a mere baby like her could be blamed for anythin'."

"She can be blamed, and justly at times," asserted Miss Gorton calmly and judicially. "Cornelia Rossmore has what none of her relatives have ever given signs of possessing, so far as I have been able to discover, and that is—personality. When her personality is recognized, she responds. When it is ignored, she also responds, and most disagreeably, which is somewhat presumptuous in a child."

Not understanding Miss Gorton's remarks, Mrs. Connolly chose to regard them as wholly malicious.

"Of course, you never did have any use for the Rossmore offspring, Miss Gorton. Every one knows that, and why. So naturally you're down on Cornelia, too."

"I fail to see how my personal attitude toward Cornelia concerns you in the least, Mrs. Connolly."

"All the same, it does concern me!" The pilgrim from Coldstream began to wheeze asthmatically, as she always did when anger remained unchecked. "From what I've heard, I wouldn't put it beyond you to—punish her if you took a notion—pinch her and all that—and she ain't yours, and you hain't any right to."

"If you'll kindly excuse me," said Miss Gorton, gazing remotely in an opposite direction, "I think I'll close this window."

For fully fifteen minutes the women

outside waited for her to reappear, and Mrs. Connolly shook the gate until she split a glove. Between wheeze and perspiration, she was in a most unpleasant state.

"Miss Gorton!" she screamed persistently. "Hoo-hooo! Hoo-hoo, Miss Go-o-o-orton!"

The window slid up with quick noiselessness. Miss Gorton, looking fresher than ever, confronted her ruffled summoner.

"You almost waked Cornelia," she said in a carefully lowered voice, but without agitation. "And let me tell you, Mrs. Connolly, that if you insist upon coming in here, I shall walk out, quarantine or no quarantine; and if I carry infection to the town, every one shall know where to place the blame."

And again the window descended as on velvet wheels.

Halfway between the cottage and his office, the occupants of the buggy encountered Doctor Moore.

"Better go right back to Coldstream," he advised Mrs. Connolly to that lady's great discomfiture. "Miss Gorton doesn't like the job of nursing Cornelia, but she's putting it through all right. I don't want her to walk out and break quarantine, so you'd better leave well enough alone."

The aged horse increased his pace noticeably when the tassel of the whip gave him the hint to move on once more, for his nose was turned in the direction of Coldstream, and Coldstream meant home and supper.

Two weeks later, Mrs. Connolly and Miss Ferris, arrayed in their Sunday best, were ushered by a white-capped maid into the cool parlor of the Gorton home. Side by side on the big green sofa they formally waited for Miss Gorton to descend the grand staircase. As Mrs. Connolly looked about at the stately furnishings, there crept a slight additional stiffness into her back—the stiffness of pride. With Cornelia housed within these walls, did she not have a sort of family interest in the splendor of her surroundings? She shuffled her feet appreciatively over the thick pile of the velvet carpet, and drew

creases with her gloved forefinger on the silk-velvet arm of the sofa.

"They say that marble statue over by the window—the man with wings growin' out of his feet—was presented by her father as a weddin' present same time as he deeded her this house. You can imagine how much poor John must have thought of Eliza, throwin' all this over to marry her!"

"Sh! Some one might hear you!" warned Miss Ferris. She was still somewhat dubious of a friendly personal reception by the mistress of the house, even though circumstances had shaped themselves differently since Cornelia's recovery.

"I reckon not. I can see the stairs in that big lookin'-glass over the mantel-piece, and that must be her walkin' round overhead."

Miss Ferris slid a bit nearer to her corpulent companion, her eyes fixed cautiously on the mirrored staircase.

"No wonder she's so sour and cross! It must have been awful for her to live alone here all these years—no matter how much money she has—looking down at your brother's house from those side windows every day of her life to remind her of her disappointment in love. How do you suppose she's ever been able to stand it?"

Mrs. Connolly raised pitying eyes toward the crystal chandelier.

"The land only knows! You can see just how crazy she must have been about him, seein' what she's done now for Cornelia."

Miss Gorton's figure was reflected, ghostlike, in the mirror at that moment, and instinctively they clutched at each other's fingers, then moved apart.

No sooner had greetings been exchanged and Cornelia's health inquired about, than Mrs. Connolly burst forth in a carefully prepared speech:

"I've called here on purpose to tell you how much obliged I'm and my husband and all Cornelia's relatives are for what you've made up your mind to do. I got your letter, and sent it all round to the rest of 'em, and the last one of us is willin' you should adopt her, of course. And it's very kind of you,

though I s'pose it's only natural. I reckon nursin' her day and night was what made you get so fond of her."

"But I never said I was fond of her," Miss Gorton corrected, somewhat frigidly. "You might as well understand things as they really are. I have not found Cornelia a lovable child at all, though occasionally a likable one."

"Well," amended Mrs. Connolly, nonplused at the unexpected reception of her carefully prepared effort, "I reckon then, you're takin' her in on account of—rememberin', that is— Well, of course, every one knows you and John was mighty fond of each other once, and—"

She grew red, and began to stammer. This was the last subject she had meant to mention, and she could not imagine how she had been betrayed into it.

"Oh, then every one thinks it's sentiment that induced me to adopt Cornelia—romantic memories of her father, and so forth?"

"Dear me, Miss Gorton," murmured Mrs. Connolly, fairly choking with embarrassment, "I didn't mean to say it as flat out as all that, but if you hain't takin' Cornelia because you're fond of her, what else is there to think except it's for the reason that you've never got over carin' for John?"

A strange smile passed over Miss Gorton's features, almost as if she had found the question amusing. She walked to the big bay window commanding a view of the sloping street and the yellow Rossmore cottage at its foot.

"Poor John!" she said, and her voice was once more that of the proud and pleasant girl whom the years had changed into a proud and unpleasant woman. "I never realized until I went there how squalid his home life had been, what his long struggle against poverty and ill health must have meant to him—after he left my father's employ, and the affair between us was over."

She turned abruptly, and faced the wondering women on the sofa.

"No, it isn't love, or sentiment, that

has decided me in my course toward Cornelia—it is justice—plain justice! Seeing things as I do now, I'm bound to take care of her—I'd despise myself if I didn't!"

"That's mighty nice of you, lookin' at it that way, Miss Gorton, but I can't see what justice has to do with the case, seein' it was John's own fault you never married him."

Miss Gorton dissipated the ten-year illusion very gently.

"But it wasn't John's fault—it was mine. You see—it was I who jilted him!"

"What?" Mrs. Connolly almost shrieked the startled interrogation.

"Yes, it's quite true. But I was rich and he was poor, and I thought it might make it easier for him if I allowed it to appear the other way—so we agreed on that to spare his pride. I didn't care what any one thought, but he did. Now—dead and buried—the truth can't

harm him, and I'm a bit tired of sailing under false colors for so long."

Mrs. Connolly stared at the speaker, aghast, and her spine relaxed into humble limpness. She had always felt proud of her defunct brother's reputation as the man who had coolly cast aside a millionaire's daughter, and had secretly wished that the chief achievement of an otherwise commonplace life might appear engraved on his tombstone. She felt robbed of a precious heritage.

"Then," she wavered, "I reckon you won't enjoy Cornelia at all."

"Oh, but I am enjoying her already," Miss Gorton replied, with unmistakable heartiness. "She has personality, and interests me. I was never a lovable child myself, so I fully understand her. We shan't be crazy about each other, but we are already friends—very good friends—and friendship lasts longer than sentiment."



The Reward of Pain

TILL I lay ill, I did not know how high
 The white-armed sycamore stood up to raise
 Its crest of leaves, but when long, empty days
 Were mine, I watched its play against the sky.
 Till I lay ill, I knew not there could lie
 Such mauve about the sunset, nor such maze
 Of soft, dull blues, the kind the artist lays
 In quaint Japan, when his brown fingers try
 Fair Fuji's lines. I never knew how shone
 The star of tenderness till joy's eclipse,
 When—murmuring your message there alone—
 I laid in stealth your roses on my lips.
 Pain touched my eyes—I saw new sky and tree;
 Pain touched my soul—love brought new life to me!

—JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.

Reprieved

By Grace MacGowan Cooke

Author of "The Power and the Glory," "The Joy Bringer," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

THE girl settled back in the carriage, drew her evening cloak about her, and lifted a mutinous face for a final good-by to the man at the carriage window. Street lamps flickered with a shaken brilliance along the thoroughfares of the little Southern town. The girl in the shadow was only a conjectured presence, a pair of luminous eyes looking out of the dimness at her affianced husband, Russell Ford.

"Business!" She echoed his word derisively. "How many women's hearts have been broken on thy altar, O business! Tell the truth, Russ—you won't go with me to the Liddells' dance because you're afraid Clive Berrien will be there."

"Afraid!" Ford's square jaw looked squarer as he thrust it forward. "I'm not afraid of any man—in the way you mean. Ally—I wouldn't hang on to any girl—not any girl—if she knew of a man she wanted worse. That's my platform."

"Oh, that's your platform, is it?" jeered Alison. "Then why don't you come to the Liddells' dance to-night?"

"I've told you that I have a business engagement," Ford said patiently. "It takes me to West Baden. A man that's getting married to you—doesn't want to slight his business, Ally. We both like plenty of money. What's the matter with you to-night?"

He leaned forward and looked at her anxiously, trying in clumsy masculine fashion to understand the fiery, butterfly nature that charmed him.

"You'd better come to the dance," she repeated.

"I will, if I can get back before midnight," Ford told her. "You save a dance for me at midnight, Ally. Will that do?" He stepped back, with lifted hat.

"Come and see how it does," she taunted him, as the carriage rolled away.

She leaned back on the cushions and tried to think. She was in that curious, excited mood that sweeps over a temperament like hers when the wedding day, the surrender of her self and her will—as she regards it—to the stronger self and will of another, comes close. She tried to believe that she was very angry at Russell. She made a conscientious effort to revive her past interest in Clive Berrien, the boy who had lived next door to her all her life, with whom she had gone to kindergarten, quarreled and flirted in pinafores.

She and Clive had been the neighborhood terrors, the wildest young hawks in their town, leaders of raids, breaking up dancing classes with demure requests for a sun dance or a war dance, sweethearts at times, but quarreling always. Clive had chosen to take her engagement to Russell Ford as a heartbreak for himself, and he had been out of Masonville for six months; time enough, with Clive, as Alison well knew, for a round half dozen other affairs—yet she could not help a thrill of excitement at the thought of seeing him again. He was likely to drop at once into the position of rejected swain, and Russell's inconsiderate placing of business before her made her ready to attempt reprisals with Clive.



He leaned forward and looked at her anxiously, trying in clumsy masculine fashion to understand the fiery, butterfly nature that charmed him.

The Liddells' ball was a valentine dance; decorations of cupids and skewered hearts adorned the walls; favors of doves and darts would be used in the cotillion. Men and maids were mated by means of red cardboard hearts torn in two, one half to each of a pair. The first thing Alison saw when she entered the ballroom was Clive Berrien across the room from her, standing with a hand thrust into a waistcoat pocket—since his evening clothes afforded no such receptacle in the trousers—and glowering from under trag-

ically slanted brows at a card in his hand. Athwart his white forehead drooped diagonally that heavy lock which she had once accused him of arranging before his mirror. It certainly was the proper trademark for a poet, and Berrien's fugitive verse was in all the magazines. By that same token, he had written some excellent poetical reproaches to herself, for which, she reflected comfortably, he afterward got well paid in cash.

"Oh, Alison—where's Russ?" cried Amy Liddell, as she greeted the newcomer. "I want to give him the other half of your heart, of course."

Alison looked and saw that her hostess held a red cardboard heart, artistically broken across. At the moment, Amy thrust one half into her hand, and repeated her inquiry.

"Where's Russ? The others had to draw, but I want to give him this, so you two can be together. Of course, you'd want to."

"Russ had a—business engagement," said Alison, all the pretty color fading, but her eyes defiantly bright, her head up. "He said he'd be here by midnight—if his horse can make it in that time," she added.

"Well"—Amy considered the situation with embarrassment—"what'll I do? I kept this one heart out for you two. If I leave his half till he comes, you'll have no partner till then, and if he doesn't come—"

"It's mine, anyhow."

An authoritative masculine voice cut athwart Amy's uncertainties, strong, white, masculine fingers took possession of the mating bits of torn pasteboard. Clive Berrien had come straight across the room so soon as he saw Alison, and had listened shamelessly to their discussion.

"No—you can't do that. Give those right back," Amy ordered him. "You've got your half of a heart already. It's the mate to mine."

She revealed naïvely her plan for securing him, but Berrien only laughed.

"Sorry," he said, "but this is fate, Amy. Who can be wiser than fate?" And he walked off with Alison before either girl quite knew what was being done.

"Beastly bore, having to hop around like so many dervishes," he told her. "Let's go outside. It's as hot in here as the Fourth of July."

It was a delicious night, with a fulling moon that left pools of mysterious shadows about under the leafless trees, and silvered the bare branches till their gaunt skeletons showed almost a spring-time beauty. Berrien brought a wrap, and they tucked themselves into the angle of a wide, deserted veranda, and began to talk in eager, hurried, low tones. There had never been lack of topics of conversation between them. Sometimes Alison felt wearied by the continual pitch and toss of ideas which their meetings always evoked. In fact, they were too restless, too intense and active a pair to endure each other long; they were too much alike.

Clive had taken the farther end of a long, white boa that twisted around her bare neck, and was brushing his cheek with its feathers.

"So Russ Ford thinks you're the kind of girl that'll wait till midnight for him, eh?" he opened out. "Are you?"

"Why, yes," agreed Alison, in that silky, sarcastic tone that used to mark the phase of her disposition Clive most readily evoked. "I'm waiting for him—don't you think?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," Berrien went on, with waxing enthusi-

asm. "I came back to Masonville to find that out. But you don't care. You'd just as soon my heart would be all busted to smithereens as any other way. I don't know but you'd druther, as we used to say, when we were engaged that time I gave you a brass curtain ring. How old were we, Ally—seven and nine?"

"Course I'd rather you'd have a broken heart," said Alison wickedly. "You're so much more amusing when it's all smashed. Besides, a poet's got to have one—how's he going to 'po' unless he's got a broken heart to 'po' from?"

"Heaven be merciful to us, is that a pun?" inquired Berrien. "You've caught the pun habit from Russ Ford. I guess I'll never want to see you again after you're Mrs. Russ."

He flung the feather ornament toward her, turned sidewise, and took his knees into a sudden embrace, tossing the heavy, black lock out of his reckless, blue eyes. Clive consistently treated evening clothes as he had been wont to treat his rompers in infancy.

"I know Russ Ford's kind of man," he declared, with gloom. "He'll make you over as women make over a last year's dress—ripping, and turning, and ironing out, and rending away, and putting his brutal, stupid, merciless scissors into your character wherever he thinks you're not cut to the conventional pattern."

"Suppose we don't talk about Russ," said Alison coldly.

"All right," agreed Berrien promptly. "I'd rather talk about you and me. Want to go round to the parson's and get married? It would serve Russ Ford jolly well right to come back at midnight and find you Mrs. Somebody Else."

"I believe I'd rather go in and dance," said Alison languidly.

"I'm on," agreed Berrien, leaping lithely to his feet, and pulling her up after him; "only you don't dance with anybody but me this night. We're two souls with but a single heart, and that heart's broken."

He delayed her a moment; he would have ventured open love-making, but

she was not ready for it. She hurried him into the ballroom, where they danced together, whispering, plainly working up to one of the mad pranks that, in earlier years, had astonished and alarmed their circle whenever these two got together. Amy Liddell divided her watching between them and the clock. She wished it were midnight. She wanted authoritative Russell Ford to walk in and settle with these two young outlaws.

Fifteen minutes of twelve o'clock found them once more on the balcony, and now it was Alison who returned to the earlier proposition of the evening.

"Changed your mind about walking round to the parson's and getting married, haven't you, Clive?" she taunted. "If I asked you now you'd say: 'Excuse me, lady—I've got another engagement.'"

Something curiously tense in Berrien's attitude caught the girl's eye, and made her laugh.

"Speak up," she urged. "Speak up, Clive. It's pretty near too late, already."

"Too late!" echoed Berrien, as if she had prodded him. He looked at his watch and snapped it shut. "I dare you—I double dare you—I double dog dare you, Ally—to come right round to Doctor Patterson's and be married to me this minute."

A moment they stood, clasped hands trembling to the mad plunge of rebellious hearts, eyes seeking eyes in the dimness, carried back to that half-forgotten time when they had been boy and girl lovers, rebuilding it out of the irresponsible attractions of youth and propinquity. Inside the house, music pleaded and murmured of trysts and matings. Why was not Russell here? Was it her fault that he left her to the importunities of others? Why did he not stay by to guard his own?

"I might have known you were only fooling me again," Berrien said at last, bending close to study her face in the light from the windows. "Oh, of course—Ford's twice the match that I am. Women always dote on big, overbearing men. He's got you bound hand

and foot. He'll have you more and more, as time goes on."

"He hasn't—he won't!" Alison defended herself incoherently. "You have no business to——"

Even as she spoke, for what reason she could never afterward remember, they were hurrying across the porch, and toward the front steps. A group of couples poured out of the door as they reached it; Amy Liddell's voice called after them:

"Where are you two sneaky things going? I think it's a shame to run away in the middle of my dance! That's the way you two wretches always did when you played partners."

Berrien had drawn the girl's arm through his; at the foot of the steps he stopped and faced about, with the light from the doorway striking full across his handsome, reckless face, his bare head, with its tossing, black mane, the whole dashing, arresting figure of him.

"We're going around to Doctor Patterson's to be married," he said, in a voice so serious that, after the first breath of laughter, it hushed the group on the porch.

"Do you suppose they are?" cried Amy. "Ally—Ally! Come back here a minute," she called after Alison, running down to the gate. "I want to speak to you. Ally—wait! You must! Oh, why doesn't Russ come?"

Amy had always been silly about Clive. Making no motion to go back, Alison turned her head.

"Russell Ford and I will settle our own affairs, thank you," she said. She certainly wasn't going to have the whole Ford-Liddell connection trying to put her in leading strings.

That foolish speech got her fairly launched. She and Clive Berrien had left the Liddells' dance with the avowed intention of getting married. Clive grasped her hand; together they ran. It seemed but a moment till they turned the corner, and the parsonage was in sight.

Then something cold laid hold of the girl's heart. How was she to go back—or forward? How retrace these mad, thoughtless steps? Why didn't she



"No—you can't do that. Give those right back," Amy ordered him. "You've got your mate of a heart already. It's the mate to mine."

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"And you and I are going to be married to-night," said Russell Ford firmly.

wrench her hand free of her companion's and cry: "Stop! Of course I'm not going to marry you. We're going back this minute!"

Why not? Her breath came in little gasps. She glanced up in the moonlight at the set, white profile of the young fellow who was jerking her along with him. Did he really love her so?

"Clive," she panted, "I can't. Wait a minute."

The words had brought them to the parsonage gate, but an angle of the church cut off their view of its living-room windows.

"You can't what?" Berrien asked.

She noted how haggard and desperate he looked. Was all that love for her, or did he more than half hope that she would even yet refuse? They were too well acquainted for her not to find something in his manner that did not sort with the triumphant lover in the hour of his success. She had parted her lips to speak when the clock in the church tower began to strike midnight.

Twelve ponderous, sonorous, reverberating strokes, delivered slowly, each one falling on the heart of Alison like separate note of doom. She was sobbing wildly before the last one sounded. Russell had said he would come at midnight. He was back there at the Liddells' right now. What would Amy Liddell say to him? Why was she standing at the church gate with Clive Berrien? She and Clive always fought like cat and dog, as soon as they'd told each other the news. It would be horrible to be married to him. In her dismay, she pulled away from him and went past the gate. He followed, laying a hand on her shoulder before he spoke.

"Alison," he began solemnly, and, as he did so, they looked up and saw the living-room windows of the parsonage glowing with light, and on the blind of one a delicate, girlish profile silhouetted from the shine within. He broke off and stood staring.

"What is it?" demanded Alison.

"Who's that—in there?" he half whispered. "I—I thought the parson and all the family would have been in bed before now."

Alison laughed wildly.

"You hoped they would, didn't you?" she inquired. "That's Elsie Patterson. She just came to-night—that's the reason they're up so late. You used to know Elsie Patterson—*Why, Clive!*"

At the words he had dropped his hand from her shoulder as if the touch burned. He kicked the gate shut, and stood glaring at her.

"You can think whatever you please of me, Alison," he said thickly, "but I'm not going in there and ask Patterson to marry us."

"You aren't?" cried Alison, in sudden rage. "I suppose you think I will. I see what's the matter with you. Elsie Patterson was at Glenn Springs for the holidays, when you were there. I suppose she's broken your heart all over again. I suppose now that she's the only woman you ever loved—and she's rejected you."

"No." Berrien stood with hanging head. "She's accepted me. We were to be married in May."

Behind them sounded the quick rattle of wheels. A buggy driven at breakneck speed pulled up at the curb. Russell Ford, tossing the reins to the driver, leaped out and crossed the sidewalk. He checked himself so close to them that Alison heard his deep, labored breathing; yet that dignity which never left him was more pronounced than usual when he inquired evenly:

"Are you just going in—or coming out?"

"Clive's going in," Alison answered.

"And you?" urged Ford. "I came past the Liddells', and Amy said—she—they thought I'd find you here."

Berrien was halfway up the walk.

"Elsie Patterson's got back," remarked Alison inconsequently. "She and Clive are going to be married in May."

"And you and I are going to be married to-night," said Russell Ford firmly. "I've brought the license in my pocket. I warned Doctor Patterson by phone. That's why the windows are all lit up. Come on, dear."

And he drew her through the gate.

M. U'REN

BY
ALMA

MARTIN

ESTABROOK



Author of

"There Are None So Blind——"

"The Cure Time Sent," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
SIGURD SCHOU

AN earnest-faced young man, of vigorous physical make-up, and a nervous manner, paced beside the iron fence in the depot at Denver, and speculatively regarded the several trains which lay on the tracks ready to be off within the quarter of an hour. Placards at the rear of each bore names suggesting lofty peaks and cool retreats and pleasant lodges, but the fact that he was familiar with them argued against them. *He was seeking that place of which neither he nor anybody else had ever heard.*

Glimpsing a fisherman's train on the farthest track, he passed instantly beneath the spell of its open coaches with their gayly striped blinds, and of the two squat engines that seemed panting to climb to indefinite heights.

He shot into the depot, and bought a ticket to the head of the cañon through which the train would pass. At the spot which seemed to him most tempting and most isolate he would swing off, with his one piece of baggage, and the trick would be turned. *He would have escaped from the mob that hounded him.*

He was John Woods Headley, and, although he lacked two years of being thirty, he had routed a State-wide po-

litical ring whose long standing and apparently invincible graft had been the particular shame of his own party. There had been an upheaval whose violence had surprised him quite as much as it surprised anybody, followed, as is always the case, by a slight subsidence which had, however, left him far above every one else, on the highest pinnacle of the hilltop of political perspicacity.

Reformers had besieged him. The "Progressives" had lifted pleading, nonpartisan voices—it lacked but a few weeks of election—and clubs and congresses and Chautauquas had deluged him with invitations to speak before them.

He had anticipated nothing of the sort, and, being amazingly modest, had been appalled by all this publicity. He had endured it for two months, talking day after day, until his tongue had very much the feeling of a plush rag, partaking of importunate hospitality until his digestion was a reproach and sleep became a farce. Then at last it had reached the stage where he was ready to run at the sound of his own name, to flinch at the sight of his shadow. And with characteristic decision, he had packed his bag and bolted.

With a feeling of tremendous relief

he settled back into his seat, as the train crawled up the narrow cañon, past summer cottages amiably hobnobbing, past wee-bit hotels flying their Stars and Stripes, into a farther country where there were only the shining river and the rocks and the cool twilight of firs. Glancing out at last, he saw the place that looked best to him, a solitary cabin up the gulch from a modest little inn, the cabin bearing an unmistakable "for rent" sign.

He caught up his bag, and sprang from the train as it stopped at the small station.

"It's great!" he said to himself, with enthusiasm. "Now I'll have some peace."

He did not hear a woman who leaned from the window of the car he had just quitted, to exchange hasty greetings with a friend on the platform. Her eager whisper left him unperturbed.

"So, it's here he's getting off!" she exclaimed. "You know who it is, don't you? Everybody's talking about him. Frightfully modest, but——"

"What's his name?" asked the woman on the platform.

The woman in the coach called it back as the train began to move, but it was lost in the rumble of wheels.

Headley found that he could get his meals at the inn, and the cabin suited him exactly. There were only a few guests in the house, the landlord assured him, pushing the register across the desk to him. If quiet was what he wanted, he had come to the right place.

Headley scanned the register, and finding no one there whom he knew, dipped the pen into the ink, and was just about to sign his name, when he remembered that to do so might invite disaster. Any train might bring some one who would recognize it, and there would be a disgusting repetition of the very thing he had come away to escape. He couldn't risk that. Better incognito. Yet to take another name than his own gave him pause. It seemed ridiculous that he should be driven to such a strait. Visions of what he had just been through swept him, however, and,

after an instant's temporary indecision, which he covered by cleaning the pen, he wrote, in his large, forceful hand: "M. U'Ren."

"At least," he said to himself, "I'll wager I haven't taken another man's name. Lord, that was an inspiration! I wonder how it popped into my head. M. U'Ren! It's a cognomen to conjure with!"

A little amused at the way he had met a situation new to him, he picked up his bag, and went whistling off to the cabin up the gulch, a great peace upon him.

That evening, before dinner, the landlord introduced him to the other boarders, most of whom received him with a careless, unimpressed affability very soothing to his modest soul after all the fuss that had been made over him.

One large, formless woman, however—the one whose friend had talked with her out of the car window—looked up at him, and said with restrained effusiveness:

"I already know M. U'Ren." Whereupon she lifted something before his eyes, then flashed it triumphantly upon the little group.

It was her great moment, the moment for which she had impatiently waited ever since she had hurried from the train to the inn, and had surreptitiously scanned the register before the ink was dry.

The thing that she so proudly displayed was a thin white-and-lavender volume, with large gold letters upon it. As these letters reduced themselves to order beneath John Woods Headley's astounded gaze, he read:

THE TEXTURE OF A DREAM, by M. U'REN.

Dumb, confused, with chills running up and down his spine, and a cold perspiration breaking out all over him, he continued to stare at them.

He had been tricked by his subconscious mind! Instead of responding to his imperative demand for a name with one invented on the instant, as he had supposed, it had offered one picked up from the news stand and the

advertising column—a name that had not as yet become a household word, else he must have recognized it, but one, he had no doubt, that had just come into publicity along with the devilish little white-and-lavender volume.

Good Lord, was *this* what he had floundered into? Had he run from himself only to stumble into the shoes of a man who had written a best seller? He had a sickening realization of the pitfalls ahead. He knew what these tuft-hunting women were like; how they'd parade him, and truckle to him, and drive him crazy with their everlasting questions about his "work."

"There are many M. U'Rens," he stammered desperately. "You give me quite too much credit—"

"You're going to deny the book?" chirruped the formless person, shaking her finger at him.

"I do deny it," he declared stoutly.

She laughed, a big, amused laugh, her eyes twinkling.

"My friend had prepared me for your modesty, Mr. U'Ren," she said, "but that you should *deny* this charming, this sweet little story is quite too much. So you thought you could come up here and run away from your popularity, did you? I have found there are two things, the rumors of which, run as we may, we never escape: success and failure."

"If I had any right to all this commendation—"

"Haven't we read the book?"

"But—er—you *must* believe—"

"Really, your diffidence is quite quaint, Mr. U'Ren," put in a long-faced, youngish woman, with a laugh that held an undertone of sarcasm.

It was this remark more than anything else, perhaps, that made him set his teeth and determine to see the thing through. He smarted beneath her tone. He would let the silly farce play itself out. Yes, by Jiminy, he would!

"Do tell us if it is the first thing you have written," a young girl urged.

"And how you happened to write it," suggested another.

Thus they closed about him.

By the time dinner was over, "The

Texture of a Dream" was beginning to wear a little threadbare, and, as they began to talk, instead, of fishing and a picnic up among the rocks, with beef-steak fried in the open, he grew less and less uncomfortable, and came to view the situation with more amusement than anxiety. Unless they tripped him up on climaxes and anticlimaxes, or plots and counterplots, he felt he could come through all right. That none of them seemed to know any more about writing than he did encouraged him; and in the blithe hope that no one would appear who did, he tramped up to the cabin in the gulch and went to bed, the voice of the river falling soothingly on his ears, a wind moving among the pines and stirring an aromatic fragrance, a delicious paralysis possessing his faculties.

Nor was it until the afternoon of the third day that anything really disturbing happened. It was just after the train had come in, and he was reading in the pleasant, big hallway, while most of the guests were assembled about the desk, awaiting the distribution of the mail. Suddenly he was aware that his name had been spoken—perhaps repeated—and that they were all looking toward him.

"Your letters, Mr. U'Ren," the landlord said.

"You don't seem a bit anxious to get them," giggled one of the very young girls. "I suppose you get awfully tired of people writing to tell you how they like your stories, don't you?"

He had risen, and was moving mechanically toward the desk. Letters for M. U'Ren! What on earth could it mean? *That the man was coming here?* But he couldn't take the letters! Another person's letters! It would make him liable to the law. He didn't dare.

The landlord pushed them across the desk to him. The very young girl looked at them, and said enviously: "Mercy, what a lot!" He felt the blood in his cheeks, in the tips of his ears, and smarting beneath his eyelids.

There was just an imperceptible pause; then, like an automaton, motivated by a power over which it has no con-

trol, he stretched out his hand, drew the letters across the desk, stuffed them into his pocket, and made his escape, his mind working like mad, as he hurried up the gulch.

"This beats me!" he thought grimly. "How the deuce do some people go for years under an alias, without being found out?"

He sat down on his porch, the bowl of his pipe nursed in the palm of one

how they'd roast him for trying to get away from his "fame"! He didn't dare risk that, either.

In the end he determined to keep the letters until M. U'Ren came, then deliver them over to him, and throw himself on his mercy. If he had any sense of humor at all, the situation would appeal to him, and he would help him out.

He wondered what kind of a man



"There are many M. U'Rens," he stammered desperately.

hand, the letters in the other. What was he to do with them?

Would he have to clear out in the morning, dropping them in the mail box just before he took the train? This would save all explanation. But—but suppose he ever stumbled onto any of these people again. Wouldn't they brand him as an impostor? No, he couldn't follow that plan. If he stayed and explained, the story would get out, and, some day, into the papers, and

U'Ren was. The letters were most of them addressed in the popular feminine handwriting. Some of them breathed a soft perfume. He turned them over curiously. Lord, for just one little peep into 'em! That would "put him wise" to so much that he wanted to know. He smiled grimly at the idea of such a temptation coming to him—to John Woods Headley, the reformer!

He took the letters inside, and put them on his table, weighting them care-

fully with a flat stone that some one had decorated for a paper weight. When would U'Ren come, he wondered. To-morrow, probably, following directly on the heels of his mail.

He was at the little station at every train that came through, but U'Ren did not appear.

On the last train in the evening, a very pretty girl arrived, and, as no one from the inn was there to carry up her bag, he carried it up for her. She had brought her trunk, and had evidently come to stay for some time, and he was glad of it. The women and the excessively young girls of the inn had begun to bore him.

He left her at the desk, arranging for a room. As he passed through the big doors onto the porch, he heard the landlord remark in prideful undertone:

"M. U'Ren, the writer."

"M. U'Ren!" the girl repeated, with a little start.

"Very modest young man," said the landlord, gratified by the evident impression made upon her. "Nobody'd ever know from him that he'd ever done anything. It's good to find 'em that way once in a while. If you'll sign now, we'll go right up."

The name she signed was Lucy Smith.

"So you are the author of 'The Texture of a Dream'?" she observed to Headley the next day. It was raining, and they were in the big hall of the inn.

"They told you that?" he exclaimed, in honest annoyance. He did not mean to be trapped into direct falsehood with her, but neither did he mean to be forced into a confession, if that could be avoided. Miss Lucy Smith's sarcasm could be very keen, he imagined.

"They say you dislike talking about your work," she remarked, considering him with the queer, intent look that she had bent on him several times that morning—a look beneath which he found himself increasingly restless and anxious. "Your case is unique. I've never seen a writer yet who wanted to talk of anything *but* his work."

"Have you read 'The Texture of a Dream'?" he inquired.

"I—er—picked it up last night from the table in the living room."

"You should have let it lie, but since you didn't, it ought to be easy for you to understand why I don't want to talk about it," he explained, with facetious evasiveness. "You wouldn't want to discuss it if you'd been answerable for it, would you?"

She laughed delightfully. "No, I don't think I would," she admitted; and laughed again, very softly.

"Good for you! I like the truth."

"One doesn't meet it very often nowadays," she mused, fixing him once more with her steady, measuring glance. "So you don't consider the book an inspiration? You don't—er—claim that for it?"

"Inspiration! Good Lord, that mush and milk!"

She studied the tips of her utilitarian shoes for a minute, giving him the opportunity to study *her*. Something in the dancing corners of her mouth brought him up sharply. He felt as if he had been struck a physical blow. She was laughing at him! *She knew M. U'Ren!* Perhaps she was his niece, or his cousin, and had come up here ahead of him, to spend the vacation with him.

With this glimmering of understanding, his embarrassment strong upon him, all his sense of dignity and his self-respect writhing beneath the situation in which he found himself, its portent striking him as it had not done before—for all his anxiety concerning M. U'Ren's arrival—he was on the verge of taxing her with knowing U'Ren, of admitting his own absurd masquerading, and of trying to explain it to her, when the clerk behind the desk finished distributing the mail, which seemed to Headley to arrive every quarter of an hour or so.

Immediately there arose the unfeeling call: "Your mail, Mr. U'Ren! Your mail!"

To his harried imagination, the large, formless woman had become the coryphaeus of this absurd Greek chorus; in other words, she was the Voice, the very young girls, the Echo, and the

maddening refrain was ever: "Your mail, Mr. U'Ren! Your mail!"

Goadedly he arose. Lucy Smith arose with him, and they moved toward the desk.

There were not so many letters that morning as usual. Atop them was one with a publisher's stamp, which looked fat and heavy, as if it might contain a statement of sales and a check for royalties. Could he take them deliberately beneath the perplexed gaze of this girl who undoubtedly knew U'Ren? It seemed to him that her gray eyes would bore straight through him.

He made a sudden pretense of examining a new picture of the inn exhibited back of the desk, and, as he did so, it seemed to him that Lucy Smith waited, drawn up and unsmiling, on his next movement. For the life of him he could not tell what to do!

Then suddenly, with a careless little sweep of her brown hand, she pushed the letters toward him.

He experienced the most tremendous relief of his whole life. He could have done any silly, wild thing, out of sheer thankfulness; for the action, it seemed to him, proved so many things that he acutely wanted proven: that she wasn't U'Ren's niece, or his cousin, or his aunt; that she didn't mistrust him; and that all his fear had been the direct result of his own taut nerves.

After that, eased and encouraged by her frank friendliness, he ceased entirely to have any sense of strain with her, and they slipped with astonishing celerity into the most delightful comradeship possible. There was a spontaneous merriment about her that kept him choking and shouting with fun, and for the first time in his rather matter-of-fact existence, he understood what Charles Lamb meant by the efficaciousness of "making giggle." Not that she was always flippant, by any means; for there were times when she thrilled him with her earnestness, and with glimpses she gave him of the soul behind those merry gray eyes of hers.

In truth she had such an exhilarating, such a decidedly recuperative effect upon him, that for two or three days

following, he all but ceased to wonder what had happened to M. U'Ren that he did not appear, or to worry about the mail which continued to accumulate on his table in the cabin up the gulch.

Lying on his couch one afternoon, thinking idly of her, something queer about the table impressed him, and he lifted himself to his elbow to have a better look at it.

With an exclamation of alarm, he came to his feet. *The letters were gone!*

He stood as one stricken, staring at the paper weight lying in the cleared spot where they had been. Gone! U'Ren's letters, with their sales statements and royalty checks! With their business information, and their personal inquiries! By Jiminy, this was bad! It was *serious!* Things like it were not easily explained or settled. It had passed the point of a joke, no matter how huge U'Ren's sense of humor.

He sat down limply, gaping at the table. Who had taken them? True, he never locked his door, and he was often away from the cabin for hours. But who was there to practice petty thieving up here except the servants at the inn, and what on earth would they want with a pile of unopened letters?

The worst of it was that he had no idea how long they might have been gone. The last he remembered about them was when he had added Saturday's mail to the pile. Nothing had arrived since, and it was Monday.

He shook off the numbness that had settled upon him and bolted down the hill to talk with the landlord. The letters must be recovered, *no matter what it took to get them.*

"Anything the matter?" questioned Lucy Smith, from the steps of the porch, where she sat arranging columbines, one of the big, starlike blossoms bobbing between her little white teeth.

"My letters have been stolen," he jerked out.

"Your letters? But hadn't you read—them?"

"Why, to be sure—er—yes—er—no—er—what does that matter? What's that got to do with it?" he floundered.

"I'd think it would have everything in the world to do with it," she replied. "There isn't ordinarily much value to a lot of old letters."

"There's all the value on earth to these! I'd rather have lost anything else in my possession."

"Dear me, is it so serious as that?" she murmured, shaking her head.

"It is the most serious thing that could have happened me," he told her grimly; and went inside to talk with the landlord.

There was now no peace for him. With the letters gone, and U'Ren likely to arrive by any train, or, in case he had changed his mind about coming, to send a forwarding order for them, he saw clearly enough the really grave possibilities of the situation.

Tired and excited, swearing roundly at himself for the mess he had got into, haunted by an alluring little brown face, and wondering vaguely at the tumult of his pulses whenever Lucy Smith came near, he slept but illy that night, and looked wretchedly harried and undone when he went to breakfast.

"If I don't stumble onto some clew to-day, I'll have a detective up here to-morrow," he said to Lucy Smith.

"Do you think that necessary?" she asked, with a start.

"You don't seem to realize the gravity of the loss," he exclaimed, in an injured tone.

She did not reply. She only regarded him with a slightly wistful expression of perplexity, frowning adorably.

That evening there was another letter from U'Ren's publishers. He slept with it under his pillow. Two or three other big square envelopes that had come with it, addressed in feminine writing, he put exactly where he had put the others, in the center of his table, weighted by the ornamental paper weight.

He expected to know what became of them!

Early the next morning, after having acquainted everybody with his plan for the day—from the cook who put up his lunch to the very young and

easily impressionable girl who had begged him for autographs for all her friends—he took his rod and basket, and went off for a day's fishing.

He would have taken Lucy Smith along, but that he thought she might hinder him somewhat in the masterpiece of strategy he had planned.

Halfway up the stream and well out of sight, he scurried quickly up the bank, shot over the rocks, and plunged into a zigzagging arroyo that finally brought him out among the thick pines back of his cabin in the gulch.

Well shielded from sight, he sat down to await whatever might happen.

He had not long to wait. Within the half hour some one came swiftly up the path toward the cabin—a slender, dark-clad figure that he could not recognize for the distance and the trees and bushes that grew so thickly between. One minute he thought it the impressionable young girl, the next it looked to him like one of the Jap kitchen boys.

It paused in front of his door, looking quickly about; then ran lightly up the steps.

Slipping, jumping, half falling over the rocks, he raced down the hillside, and shot into the house by the rear door, which he had purposely left open.

The house was empty. The letters were gone. And across the floor was a trail of columbine petals.

He ran through the house and out onto the front porch, expecting to overtake the culprit. But swift as he was, the thief had been swifter. There was no one in sight. No one but Lucy Smith, coming leisurely up the path, a basket full of pine needles over her arm.

"Where did they go?" he shouted at her. "Which way?"

"They? Go?" foolishly repeated she, stopping in the trail, and looking at him as if she thought him quite mad.

He came down to her in jumps. His face was splashed with heat and excitement, and grim with determination.

"The letters. More letters stolen!" he explained jerkily. "I saw the thief. Slender, dark—" He came to a dead



"Do you think you're played quite fair?" he asked. "Laughing at me from the first, and—"
 "Not laughing," she corrected; "only—wondering."

pause, staring at the columbines in the belt of her navy-blue cheviot.

"What have you in your basket?" he asked, with a queer unsteadiness.

"Pine needles for a pillow," she replied gayly, holding it out to him.

"But—er—in the bottom of it?" he insisted, his eyes glued to something white that protruded.

"More pine needles, for more pillows," she laughed; and made a spring for a low-hanging bough.

Her foot slipped on the sliding needles, and, in recovering her balance, she dropped the basket, the contents spilling out.

"My letters!" he cried acutely.

"My letters," she said, her little brown head high.

They faced each other in silence for a moment, then she began to laugh, and kept it up so long that two crested jay birds quarreling in a near-by tree stopped to peek around a limb at her, her little brown face bewitchingly screwed up, her eyes dancing.

"When you're through laughing, perhaps you'll explain," Headley said hotly. "I suppose the fact that you consider these letters yours means that whatever belongs to U'Ren belongs also to you? Is that it?"

She nodded, looking down at the spilled pine needles.

"You're engaged?"

She lifted her eyes to his for just a flash, then she looked beyond him toward a rose-tipped cloud that floated

above the top of a gaunt old pine. His pulses pounded, while he waited for her reply.

"I—I'm afraid my future is irretrievably bound up with M. U'Ren's. Yes," she admitted.

Things seemed to turn black before his eyes. He sat down on a log and wiped his forehead. He tried to say something, but it was more like a groan than like speech.

"It'll be a good story to tell him," he suggested bitterly, after a moment.

She did not speak. She was busy with the columbines at her belt.

"Do you think you've played quite fair?" he asked, "laughing at me from the first, and——"

"Not laughing," she corrected; "only—*wondering*."

He made a shamed movement, the color high in his face. He knelt and began to put the pine needles back into the basket. When he had finished, he said:

"I want to tell you the confounded story from beginning to end. I've been on the verge of telling it a dozen times a day ever since we've got to be such—such friends. I'll tell *you*, and you can tell U'Ren. I won't see him. I'm going to-morrow."

She furled her parasol and, sitting down, leaned back against the pine tree, her gaze steady upon him, a dazzling blue sky above them, the aromatic fragrance of the pines heavy on the air, and the river scolding noisily as it hurried through the cañon.

"Now that I've told you, you're probably just as far from understanding as ever," he finished dismally.

"I almost understood *before* you told me," she said. "That was why I was willing to wait for the explanation, and to trust you with the letters."

"Most girls wouldn't have waited. They'd have condemned me right on the jump. You're tremendously reasonable and generous. But even to you it must seem incomprehensible that any one could run from a little notoriety, and let his distaste for it get him into such a lot of trouble. But if you knew how I loathe such things——"

"I loathe them, too!" she put in intensely.

"You wouldn't have cut and run, would you?" he exclaimed in relief.

"Wouldn't I!"

"But you wouldn't have tried to hide under another name," he groaned. "That's the devil of it. That's what you'll never be able to excuse."

She did not answer for a moment, and her face was grave; but if he had been looking at her instead of glaring savagely at the landscape in general, he would have seen that the corners of her mouth were beginning to dance in the impish way he adored.

After an instant she said with extreme abruptness: "Suppose I told you that *I'm* under an alias this very minute?"

"You!" he all but shouted. "*You!*"

"Yes," she breathed.

"Lucy Smith isn't your name?"

"I only wish it were!" she sighed.

"Lucy is such a nice name. Mine is Mehitable. Isn't it awful?"

"Mehitable what?" He quite shouted now.

"Mehitable U'Ren," said she, and began to laugh again.

The crested jays, still quarreling in the pine plumes, did not stop to peek at her now. They had grown accustomed to the queer, rippling sound. What made them stop their strident chatter for just an instant was its sudden cessation, and the queer silence that reigned beneath the pine tree.

John Woods Headley, the reformer, had caught M. U'Ren, the writer, in his arms, and was holding her very close, his earnest face, which had been so harried for days, bending over her mockingly alluring one.

"The letters might have lain on your old table till doomsday," she was saying breathlessly, "if I hadn't been so wild to know whether or not my last story had been accepted."

"They wouldn't dare send it back, would they?" he growled threateningly, his face a little closer to hers.

"That 'mush and milk'!" she mimicked inimitably.

It was then that he kissed her.

FROM the PALACE of HIS ANCESTORS & Virginia Middleton



Author of "Gotrelly's First Capture," "The Fall of the House of Von Glehn," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

THE case of the United States treasury department against Carlo Saraseno, of Italy, became so involved, so fairly convoluted, that every one who has heard of it is justified in forming his own opinion. Was Saraseno trying to smuggle? Was he a thief? Was he a swindler? Was he merely a somewhat too individualistic young man, perpetrating a crime—to call it by so harsh a name—which was not of any real concern to the United States, especially as Italy is not so obliging as she might be to the United States in the matter of extradition of criminals? The bald records of the customs bureau, the interchange of official letters between the treasury department and the Italian consul, leave one in some doubt. The customs had declared that Carlo Saraseno was guilty of evading its regulations; the Italian consul held that he was guilty of nothing worse than impetuosity and ignorance. The true story runs somewhat as follows.

CHAPTER I.

Young Mr. Carlo Saraseno boarded the *Prinzess Irene* at Naples, one pleasant day late in August, and proceeded to make himself its most beloved passenger before the steamer stood twenty-four hours out of port. The fact that the first-cabin passenger list was mainly feminine did not altogether account for his popularity, for the men also liked him on various good and sufficient grounds, such as that he wasn't

"a sawed-off, little runt of a fellow, like so many dagos"; that he played a good game of bridge, and was not ignorant of the less universal game of poker; that he took his liquor like a man; and that he was disposed to think well of the country to which he journeyed.

Naturally, however, it was the women who found him the most agreeable. He had that air of ease and enjoyment in their society which their own men seldom have, not gaining ease until they are past the age where they have the enjoyment. Moreover, he was not quite thirty, he was extremely good looking, with dark, regular features, and he had the charm that inheres in spontaneous friendliness of demeanor; it was apparent that he no more expected rebuff than does a petted child. Yet his affability was not so much the naïveté of childhood as the manner of a man too secure of himself and of his position ever to expect inaccessibility on the part of those whom he sought out.

He spoke English with that purity of diction which belongs almost exclusively to the educated foreigner. When, semi-occasionally, he found himself at a loss for an idiomatic word or expression, his graceful, brown hands, his lithe figure, his expressive, dark eyes, all his mobile features, helped him to convey his meaning with exactness. But he was seldom at loss for a word. His education, so the first-cabin list was aware by the close of the first day, had been largely under English tutors; and he had had a year at

Oxford University when he was through at Turin, to which ancient seat of learning he had been sent, like his fathers before him, back to about the beginning of the Christian era, as Edna Wilmarth put it.

It was to her mother that she made the observation, as the two ladies sat in the sitting room between their cabins, and talked intimately before going to bed as the *Prinzess Irene* plowed her way through the blackness of the first night out of Naples.

"Why don't you like him?" asked Mrs. Wilmarth, who was somewhat given to leaping at conclusions. "Just because your father and your prospective husband belong to the excellent, American Order of the Silent Clam, so far as personal history is concerned, is no reason why you should dislike people of a more open nature."

"But I don't dislike him," protested Edna. "On the contrary, I think he's delightful. But he did manage to convey a great deal of information about himself, didn't he?"

"But not until after he knew that we knew the Princess Cenevutono," answered Mrs. Wilmarth in extenuation of the young man.

"And he knew that about five minutes after Doctor Hodgson introduced him to you, didn't he, mother darling?" Edna teased her mother gently.

"My dear, when you are as old as I am," replied the matron, somewhat majestically, "you will not be so chary of mentioning an acquaintance which establishes your standing with strangers. And I didn't want him to think that we were the usual class of stray American tourists."

"Any more than he wanted you to think that he is the usual class of stray Italian adventurer," said Edna, smiling. "Well, I think he's charming, and I'm glad he's aboard. He's the only interesting-looking man I've seen, and I had just settled down for a week of boredom at the hands of Doctor Hodgson."

"I hope you aren't going to flirt with him, Edna," began her mother somewhat worriedly. "You know these southern natures are not like those of

our men. It's dangerous to coquet with them."

"Oh, mother," cried Edna, bored and impatient, "why can't you get it through your head that I'm not the flirting sort? Besides, hasn't young Mr. Saraseno declared his entire understanding of the American girl and her point of view? Isn't he coming to settle among us because he finds himself so much more in sympathy with our democracy, our efficiency, than with the aristocratic inefficiency of his own class in his own country? I don't think you need worry about him—he's prepared to be more American than Joe himself! And Joe," she added with a little, tender smile in the depths of her clear, gray eyes and about the corners of her large, firm, wholesome lips, "can't keep the tears out of his eyes when a band plays 'The Star-spangled Banner.'"

"Well, I'm going to bed," announced Mrs. Wilmarth, rising and yawning, and dropping the unfamiliar rôle of mentor to her tall, handsome, self-possessed young daughter.

"Good idea," Edna commended her. "Send Susie in to me when you're through with her, will you please?"

By the end of the second day Miss Wilmarth and all the passengers were in possession of still further information in regard to Mr. Saraseno. Two or three ladies, ambitious of trying their small store of Italian upon him, had been entreated to let him practice his English upon them, instead. He had declared that, to his ears, the hissing ugliness of those corrupted forms of "master" and "mistress"—namely, "mister" and "missis"—were more mellifluous than the "signor" and "signora" of his native tongue. As for titles, he mocked them—which became truly interesting when Doctor Hodgson confided to Mrs. Wilmarth that the young man might properly be addressed as "count."

"He's the only son, I think," said Doctor Hodgson, "and his father's one of those impoverished old nobles dating back to the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire or thereabouts. The title



"Perhaps, when my family has been rich and famous as long as yours, I shall be able to estimate birth, and distinction, and wealth as lightly as you do."

and a tumble-down old palace in Milan and a terrible old ruin up in the Apennines are all that he has left. I have a dark suspicion he lets out floors in the palace! I think Carlo is very sensible to cut loose from it all, and to come and establish himself in the United States."

Meantime Carlo, who had a fine, swinging walk, was accompanying Edna Wilmarth on her daily four-mile constitutional around the deck. He was talking with his usual animation, his usual air of pleasant conviction that his hearer must be as much interested in him as he in himself.

"You will find I'm a better American than many Americans are, Miss Wilmarth," he told her. "I love American history—I know it; which is more than may be said of some of your countrymen, I think? Liberty, equality, fraternity—I am old-fashioned enough to find myself thrilled by those echoes from the French Revolution! And I love the country that has embodied those ideals in her government, in her society." Edna smiled a little satirically. "Ah, you laugh at me! Or is it at the stupid of your countrymen, who do not live by the light of those ideals, that you laugh? Oh, I know there are such—I have met them! Men who feel it an honor to be seen taking a drink with a duke, women who would like to buy a title for themselves or their children! I have met them, I know, they exist, but I cannot understand them. No class distinctions are any lovelier to my mind than slavery—the class distinctions of all of them are off the same piece, as you say! Personal distinctions between man and man, yes! But class distinctions, between rich and poor, between lettered and unlettered, between well-born and common—for those distinctions I care not at all. Do you?" he ended abruptly.

They had come to a pause at the stern of the vessel and were standing, Edna's eyes upon the foamy trail that spun out behind them, young Mr. Saraseno's eagerly upon her face. She brought her cool gaze back from the

water and let it rest for a moment upon the young man. Something in his look reminded her of her mother's warning. She had never seen eyes so expressive of fervor.

"I'm afraid I'm not quite so free from class prejudice as you are," she replied. "Perhaps, when my family has been rich and famous as long as yours, I shall be able to estimate birth, and distinction, and wealth as lightly as you do. But, you see, my grandfather was a dry-goods merchant, in a very small way, when he began! I'm really very proud of it," she added, laughing, "or rather of the fact that he was a very good merchant and became a very successful one. But I think I must admit that the signs of success are still almost as beautiful in my eyes as the opportunities of success. But when you come to Cincinnati, I shall introduce you to an American who shares your views entirely, though"—the tender flicker of amusement ran over her face—"he could not express them so eloquently. I mean my fiancé, Mr. Joseph Cremlin."

"Ah, you are good! You are kind! I understand you, and I thank you." Edna's face burned at the suggestion that she had been so crude as to let young Mr. Saraseno perceive that she was labeling herself "reserved," in order to keep him from proposing to her. But there seemed to be no mockery in his face or voice.

He went on eagerly: "And that is another thing I admire about your country—that wonderful institution of friendship between men and women. Here—in my country, I mean—there is no friendship possible with a woman before she is forty; and as so few women reach forty—" His eyes danced mischievously at her. She laughed, and he went on: "But seriously, I think that is the finest thing about your institutions—that possibility of a sane friendship, devoid of emotional excitement, between men and women. Ah, I am going to live, I am going to expand, I am going to grow to be myself, in your great country!"

It was natural that before such

warm-hearted, genuine Americanism of sentiment as this, Mr. Saraseno's list of friends was long before the steamer came in sight of the Statue of Liberty—which, by the way, he saluted. All the women and some of the men were eager to help him "find" himself. Every city represented on the passenger list was claimed by its enthusiastic son or daughter, as the case might be, to be exactly the place for a well-educated, enthusiastic, energetic young Italian, with a little capital—"Ah, but such a little capital!" Mr. Saraseno would interpolate—to settle. There was almost as much good will shown in the promises of introductions for him as was displayed in the presents which all the ladies of the first cabin made to the little Italian baby born in the steerage during the voyage.

Perhaps the spirit actuating the one kindness differed a little from that actuating the other—there is, after all, the possibility of an ulterior aim when one is kind to the scion of a noble Italian family, who, though "terribly poor," still has enough money to enable him to visit the whole of a vast continent before deciding just where he will settle! Still, the friendliness expressed for Mr. Saraseno was as sincere and as little tinged with self-seeking as most new friendliness is apt to be. It was a tribute to the liking and trust that his manner inspired.

Even Edna Wilmarth, cool and humorously analytic though she was, had yielded to him by the time New York was reached. She was enjoying intercourse with him, with his combination of boyish spirit and man-of-the-world ease, with his sophistication and his enthusiasm, his fluency and his capacity for fun, more than she had ever enjoyed intercourse with any but the one man, the thought of whom always brought to her somewhat too statuesque features the look of softness and gladness.

As for Carlo Saraseno himself, he reciprocated her feeling, apparently, to the utmost. His manner never transgressed the limits of a warm, comradely friendship. He told her how

much he looked forward to meeting Mr. Cremlin as well as Mr. Wilmarth, both of whom were expected to be in New York to greet the returning tourists. And when, on the night before they landed, a wireless announced that neither of the gentlemen would be on the pier because the younger had inopportunely chosen to develop appendicitis two days before, and the elder was remaining in Cincinnati to see him through the operation, young Saraseno's regret and his sympathy were too genuine to be doubted.

"But I shall come to see you," he declared warmly at parting. "First of all, I must go to Washington, for my father cautioned me to present my letters to his old friend, the ambassador, at once; and then I go for a few days to Boston, for the companion of my mother's girlhood, an American lady who was the daughter of an American artist who used to live in Rome—See how poor my memory is! I forget his name! I remember only the married name of my mother's old friend! I must bear my mother's greetings to her. And then—then to Cincinnati! I shall be in time for the wedding. Ah, believe me, my dear friend, the wedding, it will take place even as you plan in October. Never doubt it! And I shall grasp that good Democrat of yours, that good, silent Joe you told me of, by the hand, and I shall ask him to take me for a brother."

In spite of her distress, Edna laughed.

"Not the first day! Promise me you won't do it the first day," she begged. "Wait till the second."

Carlo conceded himself impetuous with a shrug and a smile.

"You shall teach me how to approach Signor Joe," he said. "But his brother I insist upon being. So I shall have you for a sister."

CHAPTER II.

As a matter of fact, Saraseno arrived in Cincinnati too late for the wedding. But that was only because Miss Wilmarth, self-willed young woman, had



"In two seconds I can destroy the good opinion I flatter myself you have formed of me."

insisted upon being married to Mr. Cremlin as soon as he was strong enough to sit up among the pillows of his bed in the private hospital in which he had been separated from his appendix, and to slip a ring upon her finger. The lack of a wedding was a great disappointment to society and to Mr. and Mrs. Wilmarth, who had taken pleasure in the thought of the splendor with which they would dress their sacrifice of their daughter to her husband. However, they admitted to each other, that, as Joe's convalescence

was turning out to be so lengthy an affair, it was a good thing they had allowed Edna to have her own way; she would have been quite unbearable otherwise!

"And if anything should happen to Joe, it would be comfortable to have the inheritance business all fixed. Joe's been making an awful lot of money lately," remarked the practically minded head of the house.

"Edward Wilmarth, how can you?" cried his wife reproachfully. "It would break her heart if anything

should happen to Joe—and she need never want money, even without his fortune!" Then she meditated a little while. "If anything *should* happen to Joe," she went on, in her turn, "I wonder whether young Saraseno——"

"On the whole, I think that's a worse suggestion than mine," replied her husband. "And, anyway, I don't like dagos."

It was at that very moment that Mr. Carlo Saraseno was announced. Before he left the house, his host was ready to retract his observation upon dagos. He, as well as his womenfolk, had made immediate response to the charm of the young man's open manner. And he was touched in his tenderest point, outside his family affections, at Saraseno's admiration and appreciation of the paintings that he had been collecting for the last fifteen years. It was something to command the attention of a man like this, a man bred in the atmosphere of great art, a man who saw with the eyes of those who had owned great paintings for a thousand years! The ejaculations of the unlearned, the voluble admiration of those who could scarcely distinguish between a chromo and a painting, had never given Wilmarth much satisfaction. But this apt, discerning, discriminating praise was another matter. His vanity fairly purred beneath it.

"You were lucky to get some of these Italian pictures before the Italian government imposed that tyrannical law as to the sale of works of art outside the country," said Saraseno, with most unwonted bitterness. "And the families from whom you bought were lucky. I know all about it," he added, resuming his usual manner of lightness and cheer, "because our family was not so lucky. We have some things—we have a fortune, a fortune—upon our walls in Milan. We have not always had bread enough to eat, and once I have even seen my mother's hands rough from housework—it is the truth I am telling you!—but we have a fortune upon our walls. The price which our own government would pay for those treasures is a bagatelle—it is con-

fiscation! Yet we may not sell them elsewhere! It is an outrage!

"It was right that Italy should have great works of art when she could afford them, when she had great artists and great merchants who could employ great artists and compensate them, when she was a rich nation, a powerful nation. But see! What is she now? It is not because I lack patriotism that I say it, it is because I see truly. She is a second-rate nation. She is impoverished, her people are ground down by taxes, rich and poor. But like some starving old *grande dame*, she will not part with the mementos of her glorious past for the sake of her present empty stomach.

"Ah, sir! It is all foolish. Not to the countries of the past does great art belong—but to the countries of the present; they can afford to buy. That might be Italy's contribution to the civilization of to-day—to send out as missionaries her masterpieces, her portable masterpieces, that is. Would she not still have enough left of art and beauty for her own children for all time? Think of her palaces that are the world's poems in marble and stone! Think of her churches that are the crystallized spirit of inspiration! Think of the frescoes! If you should send out every easel picture that is hung in Italy, she would still be rich in wonderful paintings. And some of us would pay our tailors oftener," he ended, with a laugh.

"That young man," said Mr. Wilmarth to his wife in the sanctity of their sitting room that evening, "has the head of a statesman on his shoulders."

"It's natural enough," replied Mrs. Wilmarth calmly, "for he comes of a line of statesmen, of soldiers, of princes, and all that."

"He has some very remarkable views; some very remarkable views indeed. It's a pity that that poor old country is going to the dogs at such a rate that it isn't really worth while for a young man of his intellect and his energy to stay at home. Of course, though, it's a good thing for us in

America. I'm going to introduce him to Clayton. I think I'll induce Clayton to let him in on the ground floor in that Arizona mine business. He'll make good, that fellow. Well," he continued argumentatively after a second, though his wife was far from disputing his view, "why shouldn't he? A young man who sees things so clearly. He's coming to lunch with me at the Lawyers' Club to-morrow. I'll have Clayton."

At the luncheon, the young foreigner won more golden opinions from both men, dealing with the questions of business with the same intuitive brilliancy with which he made out a case in favor of Italy's exporting her works of art. "He's an idealist. See how he talks about America and democracy—and he feels it, too! And yet he's as practical as they make them." Thus Mr. Wilmarth to his friend, when the younger man had left them and they had made their way over to the Law Association's building.

"True enough," agreed Clayton. "I wonder how much he's got that he could put into the Sant' Anita thing?"

"I haven't a notion. But I should judge, from the way he speaks, that it must be twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars. His whole capital, I think."

Clayton pondered the matter slowly.

"Not very much," he said finally. "But enough to let him in—if he's got it, and wants to come in."

It seemed, when the matter was delicately broached to Mr. Saraseno a little later by Mr. Wilmarth, that he wanted to come in very much, but that he did not have any such sum of money.

"Couldn't raise it?" asked the elder man, who felt a surprising desire that the younger should not lose what he believed to be a golden opportunity. Carlo shook his head.

"Impossible!" he said, with a patient accent of finality. And then he looked up with a glinting, bitter smile.

"And there in my father's house are paintings that would give me what I need if he only dared to send them—to send one of them!—to this country.

His own possessions, mind you, Mr. Wilmarth! And he eager—mad—to help his son, and unable to sell his own in the open market."

Wilmarth nodded, his eyes upon the floor, his chin on his chest.

"I have felt the bitterness of it especially since I have seen your gallery, sir," went on the young man after a pause. "You could appreciate what my father has—and so could Mrs. Cremlin, reared in the knowledge of real art. Ah, shall I tell you? Yes, for you will sympathize with me! I divine a sentiment in you, Mr. Wilmarth, sir. I have seen no lady in my life whom I admire as I do Mrs. Cremlin. No, do not look at me so! I knew from the first day that she was not for me—thanks to her adorable honesty, so American! And I have not hoped or aspired—I could not at the best, with my poverty—or even been unhappy. All that her gentle wisdom and frankness spared me.

"But we are emotional people, we of Italy. She is like a star to me—and yet like a lovely friend! And I have yearned to give her one bridal gift—one particular bridal gift. It is a painting that hangs above the fireplace in my own sitting room at home—it is my own picture, given to me by my father because I had such admiration for it. It is 'Diana Among Her Nymphs,' by Giovanni Bellini, the master of Titian. Ah, it is a beautiful picture! And in the goddess, proud, level-eyed, poised for the chase, there is a look that Miss Wilmarth—Mrs. Cremlin—sometimes has. You forgive my frankness?"

"Nothing to forgive," mumbled Mr. Wilmarth.

"Thank you. And there is an Andrea del Sarto you should have—you will pardon me, my friend, but it is better than yours. It is an example of his work at its best."

"I'd like to see it," said the lawyer.

"It is almost in my mind— But no! You have been introducing me to gentlemen in business, I must not show myself to you as a lawless scatter-brain."

"A lawless scatterbrain?" repeated

Wilmarth, staring at him. The young man laughed.

"In two seconds I can destroy the good opinion I flatter myself you have formed of me. In two seconds! But I think I will do it. At least you will know the worst of me, then."

"This is getting interesting," observed his host, pushing the cigars toward him with a smile. "Now what Borgian scheme are you going to spring upon me?"

"This! I have it in mind to go back to Milan, to paint over my beautiful Diana with a foolish landscape, and to import it to this country as an original modern painting. Then, when I get it here, to erase the blasphemy, and to see Diana and her lovely nymphs again before me. Then to give the painting—with your permission, of course, and Mr. Cremlin's—to Miss—to Mrs. Cremlin." He looked with a daring smile into Mr. Wilmarth's eyes.

"You paint, then?" said the elder gentleman, surviving without apparent effort the shock of Mr. Saraseno's revelation of himself as a lawless character. Carlo shrugged his shoulders.

"I daub!" he answered, self-contentedly. He rolled a cigarette with slender brown fingers, which he studied during the process. He did not raise his eyes until his host laughed aloud and thumped himself upon the knee.

"Egad!" he cried. "I don't think any one could blame you for playing such a trick. Not," he added hastily, "that I mean to suggest your doing it as you have described, for Edna. It would be—oh, quite impossible—for us to let a young man with his way to make throw away a small fortune in a present to a lady. Some day you'll want to bring it over," he added kindly, "as a bridal gift for another lady—the future Signora Saraseno. And when that time comes—oh, I don't think the trick will be so reprehensible! The government is always fair game," he added easily and conversationally. Mr. Wilmarth's public utterances were of another tenor, but a man must have his moments of relaxation. "Come, let us

look at my Andrea again. What is the subject of your father's painting? I don't remember."

"I think I didn't mention it. It's an 'Annunciation,' with a wonderful little girl of a Madonna listening, overawed, to the angel. And such a landscape in the corner—you know! A whole little principality suggested, off among the hills, under a marvelous sky. I wish you could see it."

"I wish I could," said Wilmarth, looking at his own Andrea del Sarto with a wavering pride.

The result of this and of other conversations was that Mr. Wilmarth, to the surprise of his family and his associates, took a flying trip, during the month of November, to the continent of Europe. He met in Paris Mr. Carlo Saraseno, who had preceded him by a few days, and together with that engaging young man crossed into Italy and went to Milan, as the guest of the old count. He has always admitted that never before did he know what enjoyment in foreign travel might be. A companion so full of tact, so full at once of vivacity and of dignity was a revelation. He met all sorts of men and women whom he had never met before. The week was crowded with pleasant excitement, with the agreeable sense that at last he mingled in a society where he belonged; for, brilliant, easy, gay as it was, it never allowed him to feel out of place in it, or Carlo Saraseno never allowed him to feel so. On his last day he was closeted for some time with the choleric old count.

"Not a word more!" cried that gentleman at the close of certain propositions by Mr. Wilmarth. "I have said from the first that I refused to recognize the provisions of the Italian law as to what I shall do with my property—with property that was mine before the present Italian government had any existence, had ever been dreamed of! I refuse to recognize it. I won't obey it. I don't care who would pay the export tax, you or another—I will not permit it to be paid. You may steal my 'Annunciation' and Carlo's 'Diana' for anything that I care! And if you



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get them safely out of this devilish country that has forgotten how to treat a gentleman, I shall say, 'Good!' I shall applaud you. But submit I will not—that is the whole of it, sir."

After that ultimatum, Mr. Wilmarth and Carlo had a talk.

"It's in your hands, now," said the American gentleman. "Since I cannot

frame a little code," remarked the older man, after a period of silence. "I shall want to hear when you are about to renew your interrupted American tour." They framed the code.

One day shortly before New Year, Mr. Wilmarth, once more in Cincinnati, received a cable message. He drew out a leather memorandum book

persuade your father to listen to reason——"

"Ah, that is not strange! And he knows what he speaks of, which—pardon me—you do not. Suppose that he asks permission to sell, and you to pay the export tax. Do you not know that the law will fix a figure prohibitive to you, rich though you are? They don't want art works to leave the country! That is the long and the short of it. No—unless I play my little trick——"

"That, of course, is up to you——" said the law-abiding Mr. Wilmarth.

"Then the pictures will hang upon the walls of my father's house until he sells the house to some rich South African, some British brewer. And he'll let the pictures go with the house. You do not know my father; I do. It is a matter of principle with him."

"We might

from his pocket and compared the words. Then he tore the page from the book, tore it into small bits, added the cable message to the little heap of papers, and threw them into the vast brick fireplace wherewith his private office was adorned. Then he set fire to them, and watched them burn with a pleased smile. And then he telephoned Clayton to the effect that young Saraseno had "found" the money he needed while he was at home, and that a place would have to be made for him "on the ground floor" of the mining enterprise. And in reply to something from the other end of the wire he said: "Oh, well, then! I'll put up for it at once. He won't be back for ten or twelve days. He's on one of those slow Italian steamers."

CHAPTER III.

The *Lorenzo* had been at her dock for two days. Her passengers had long since scattered, after the customary objurgations hurled at the head of the indifferent customs. Her cargo had been unloaded—mostly fruits and cheeses, wines, and oil from the Mediterranean. The ship's officers were on shore, the seamen likewise. The work of the customs guard at the entrance to the pier was become a sinecure.

In the early afternoon of the third day of the *Lorenzo's* term in port, the third officer, a chunky, little man, with a broomlike pompadour of black-and-gray hair, fierce, bristling mustachios of the same mixture, rough, heavy grizzled eyebrows beneath which his eyes were like sloes, came aboard with a party of friends and relatives, mainly feminine. Signor Liguori was a pompous little man who seemed to love his gold braid and buttons, and the authority of which they were the outward decorations. It seemed to Donelly, the guard who nodded to his greeting, and who heard him say that he was going to show his friends over the steamer, that he was particularly swollen with importance that day. Well, there had been several very pretty, black-eyed girls in the little group, before whom

any man would like to make a brave figure! Such was Donelly's tolerant mental comment as the party passed on to the long, dimly lighted pier.

They came out by and by, bubbling with laughter and thanks for the treat they had enjoyed. Donelly inferred a little feast of wine and cakes aboard. Ugh! Italian wine was bitter stuff as far as he had experienced it himself—but perhaps those born to it might have the palate for it!

Signor Liguori accompanied the party as far as the pier entrance, permitted a wrinkled old lady whom he called "aunt" to kiss him good-by, jabbered, gesticulated, kissed his hand, and generally behaved with a lack of that restraint and repose which Donelly considered "good form." And while the noisy farewells were in progress, Inspector Mark Cotrelly appeared.

Mark merely wanted some data from the watchman in regard to the movement of certain goods consigned by an olive-oil importing firm to the bonded warehouse. While Donelly supplied it, Liguori, waving his final farewells to his friends, returned to his ship. Mark, whose errand was not urgent, loitered for a few minutes of conversation with Donelly, whose reminiscences were apt to have flavor.

While Donelly was relating a tale of an Italian girl of good family who had run away with an American gambler, and of the rumpus that had been stirred up at the dock when the two were met, Liguori returned, with a big dress-suit case in his grasp. It was such an unusually large one that Mark stared at it as it came into sight. Donelly, absorbed in his monologue, did not accord it any particular attention.

"I attend to-night a banquet of the New York Sons of Garibaldi at the Hotel Astor," Liguori announced proudly, as he halted beside the guard. "My evening regalia—" He opened the big suit case and indicated a uniform of dazzling brilliancy which—with a shirt, a collar, and a few toilet necessities—made up the contents of the valise. "I am, in my home," he went on, "an officer of the company—"

He named a mouth-filling organization of patriotic intent. "That is my uniform as officer."

Donelly nodded absently after a casual glance at the inside of the bag, with its dark percale lining. He was anxious to go on with his story, which he thought a highly amusing one. He had seen Liguori's evening regalia often enough; the pompous little man was always attending banquets when he came to New York. And Liguori closed the valise again, and crossed the broad roadway along the South Brooklyn docks.

"Excuse me—just a minute—That is, I'll see you later," cried Mark, spoiling Donelly's good story, and darting out after the third officer into the maze of trucks and wagons that threaded the street. He did not realize himself, just at the moment, why he did it. Instinct would translate itself into reason later, according to its habit, and he would tell himself he was suspicious of Liguori because of the disproportion between the size of his bag and its contents; because the slate-colored percale lining had seemed to his idle glance to wrinkle; because of any one of a half dozen things. But he followed the consequential little officer because instinct guided him, as it guides the pointer dog.

Dodging among the trucks, he finally made the sidewalk, saw the quarry ahead, followed on. Liguori took an elevated train to New York. Cotrelly took it also, sitting in the next car to his man, and watching through the glass window at the end. So they came to the Manhattan end of Brooklyn Bridge, and there Liguori hesitated, bewildered by the wide choice of transportation offered him. Mark, lost in the great, constantly shifting throng of the place, watched him. By and by Liguori approached a policeman, received directions, nodded in token of his understanding, and crossed City Hall Park with Mark not far behind him.

It was something of a disappointment to the young inspector when the officer of the Italian boat seemed to be going to the hotel he had mentioned as the

scene of the Italian banquet. If he had had a rendezvous with some one downtown, if Mark could have seen him enter some other hostelry, call for some person, disappear, leave his bag, and reappear without it, he felt that that curious instinct of his would have justified itself more. But Liguori merely sat in the rather slow-moving Broadway car, and swelled out his deep chest, and frowned portentously with his bushy eyebrows, and paid no attention whatever to possible alighting places until Forty-second Street was reached. Then he began to grow restive, nervous, and at Forty-third he was already standing near the door, prepared to leave. He said something to the conductor, and Mark heard that official bawl, unconcerned, Jovelike in condescension: "Astor, Forty-fifth."

At Forty-fifth Street, half a dozen persons alighted, and three made their way into the big hotel, Mark, Liguori, and a lady in a skirt that hardly allowed room to step from the roadway to the sidewalk. The Italian steamship officer made his way to the desk, and inquired for Mr. Saraseno. He gave his name in answer to the clerk's demand, and Mark saw some prestidigitator feat of slips and tubes performed. In a few minutes a hall boy was leading the way to a certain elevator. With the busy, absorbed air of a guest of the house hurrying in on business, Mark followed and rode up in the same car with Liguori. The Italian was oblivious of him; Mark had never happened to be brought to his notice at the landing of his vessel, and just now he was too absorbed in his own thoughts, and, one would gather, in the sense of his own importance, to notice keenly any one in the elevator with him. Getting out on the eighth floor, he went toward a certain room, but before he reached it the door opened, and a dark, pleasing, vivid face appeared in the aperture.

"Ah, my good Liguori, you are welcome!" cried a cheerful voice. And then the door closed upon the pair, and a clean-cut, clean-shaven young man wandered through the maze of corri-

dors for a minute, and then descended by another line of elevators than the ones he had used in his ascent. He went to the desk and made some inquiries concerning the dinner of that evening of the Sons of Garibaldi which Liguri had so proudly named to Donelly. But as far as the Hotel Astor knew, such a society did not exist, and it was quite certain that it was not to give a banquet there that evening. Mark's trust in his instinct, which had been in abeyance, sprang up again.

It was, according to his youthfully one-sided view, exactly like the department to refuse him the warrant he desired for searching the rooms of Mr. Carlo Saraseno. He was unable to see how, with their foolish, pig-headed notions of the rights of citizens, and the rights of aliens, the police branch of the New York customs service ever accomplished anything. He was told the reputable standing of Mr. Carlo Saraseno in his own land, the rights of aliens in the matter of luggage.



The search revealed an express receipt for a parcel shipped that morning to Mr. Edward Wilmarth, in Cincinnati, insured for twenty-five thousand dollars.

"But this wasn't his luggage! This was something smuggled off the ship after the luggage had all been passed, and the cargo unloaded—something smuggled by a ship's petty officer."

"Heighy-teighy, young man," said his chief wearily. "Can't you get it through your head that the Italians are all hanging together, and that there's some kind of an Italian shindy to-night?"

"But there isn't!" wailed Mark. "The Astor has nothing booked, and

I've called up every society of Italians in New York, except the Black Hand, and not one of them is giving anything. I tell you the puffy, little dago was carrying something ashore for his friend."

"You'll have to have better evidence to adduce than that you didn't like the lining of his dress-suit case before we can do anything about it," laughed the surveyor. And Mark went disconsolate away.

He went back to the hotel. He couldn't keep away from it that evening. And seeing Mr. Carlo Saraseno acting as host, apparently, at a little dinner party, he was moved to hold a little converse with one of his friends, a house detective.

The result of the conversation was apparent the next morning when young Mr. Cotrelly appeared, radiant, in his office.

"Saraseno is smuggling pictures—I've seen them," he announced gleefully. "Now will you let me do something?"

Further information was demanded of him.

"There are three of them," he said, "cut from their frames. The largest is about thirty inches by eighteen—'Diana and Her Nymphs.' It's signed by Giovanni Bellini, but I miss my guess if it was ever painted by him. And there's an 'Annunciation,' a little smaller, but a peach! And a portrait of a dark, saturnine, medieval Italian gent—a doge, or something in that line. I don't think we've lost very much on this lot—they're probably not worth more than fifteen hundred all told. But—this is the second time within four months that the engaging young alien, Mr. Carlo Saraseno, has landed on our shores! He may be intending to keep it up indefinitely."

It was then that the surveyor's department "got busy," as Mark expressed it, and inquired, politely, but with a deadly promptness, if Mr. Saraseno would explain his possession of three pictures, undeclared in his luggage and presumably delivered to him later by one of the ship's officers from

the percale pocket of a dress-suit case. And would Mr. Saraseno kindly return said pictures until the customs department of the port of New York could decide as to their liability for duty under the tariff?

It was then that Mr. Carlo Saraseno made the slight mistake of declaring that he was questioned under a misunderstanding. He had no such paintings as those described by the surveyor's department—he had brought in no paintings. He was the perfect picture of easy, assured innocence as he made the statement; he was courteous and not in the least indignant; he seemed to say to his inquisitor, the surveyor, before whom he had been summoned, that mistakes were liable to happen at any time, and that a gentleman conscious of his own probity could well afford to overlook them.

The surveyor listened with an equal courtesy. He, too, was well aware that mistakes were liable to occur; he was even sure that mistakes were especially liable to occur when one had enthusiastic, hot-headed young assistants. But mistakes were liable to occur through too much credulity more often than through too much suspicion. He regretted to submit Mr. Saraseno to the inconvenience of a search of his premises. Mr. Saraseno begged him not to mention it.

A search of Mr. Saraseno's premises at the hotel revealed no works of art. But it revealed an express receipt for a parcel shipped that morning to Mr. Edward Wilmarth, in Cincinnati, insured for twenty-five thousand dollars. A telegram to Cincinnati ordered the seizure of the parcel in the name of the United States treasury.

Then it was that there began the triangular controversy waged for many months between the treasury department, Mr. Carlo Saraseno, and Mr. Edward Wilmarth as principals, and between a cloud of art experts and detectives as subordinates. Mr. Saraseno, engagingly boyish, told—in confidence—how he had outwitted the provisions of the Italian government in regard to the export of works of art; and how

he had hidden the paintings—cut from their frames for greater convenience in transportation without discovery—in the cabin of an acquaintance of his, the third officer of the steamship *Lorenzo*. And how, still with the fear of the Italian government upon him, he had arranged for the delivery of the pictures to him after his landing. They were, he pointed out, antiques; they were brought over to be given away to a gentleman, and a gentleman's family to whom young Mr. Saraseno found himself bound by ties of affection, admiration, and gratitude. As antiques, as goods not intended for sale, they were not dutiable under the tariff regulations of the United States. Of course, if the United States government chose to fight the unjust and tyrannical internal battles of Italy against Italy's own citizens—Mr. Saraseno's eloquent shrug indicated what a civilized opinion upon such a proceeding must be.

Meantime, the experts of the treasury department declared the pictures to be modern, merely copies of the ancient canvases they purported to be. Their value was estimated at twelve hundred dollars for the three, and the duty upon them at that valuation, together with fines for the effort to introduce them "clandestinely and fraudulently" into the country, was demanded. The Italian consul, who was busy at the time getting himself engaged and married, and who wanted Carlo as his best man, saw in the whole affair an unmannerly attempt to embarrass a young Italian gentleman of good family, who had been guilty, at the worst, of ignorance and impetuosity. But the duties and fines were not abated, and eventually they were paid by that eminent citizen, Mr. Edward Wilmarth.

"I got them out exactly as we agreed," Carlo told him. "I painted my absurd landscapes over them; I left wretched copies of them upon my father's walls—for fear of the servants, my friend! There are spies on every

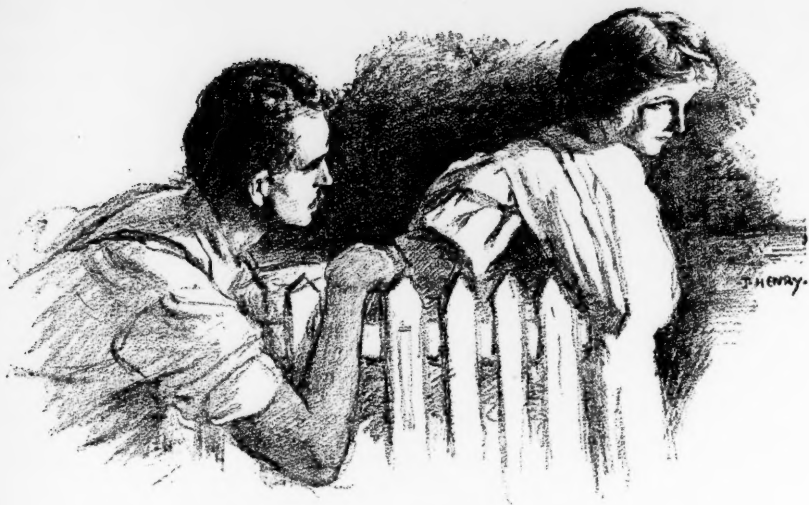
hand in my poor country now. I had Liguori hide the paintings for me in his cabin—Liguori is the brother of my old *bonne* and he will do anything for me—for a few dollars! Each day coming over, I worked in his stateroom and removed the sacrilegious veil of fresh paint—I wanted to send them to you at once, you see! Well, we are lucky, after all. Of course, I shall refund you the fines and duties the moment I receive a dividend from the mining stock. Oh, those splendid asses of experts! Oh, those magnificent donkeys! But still we are lucky! If they had known the pictures for the originals they are—or if they had told the truth, instead of trying to put a few pence into your country's treasury—why, my country might have taken some steps against me. As it is, their decision—and the blasphemous copies upon the walls at home—have saved me. But—modern! Oh, the numskulls! It is too funny to laugh at, is it not?"

"Yes," agreed Mr. Wilmarth dubiously. "Yes."

He looked long and silently at his treasures. He rather wished at the moment that the Italian government had taken some action against Mr. Saraseno. He disliked it that it should base its indifference upon the assumption, publicly stated, that the paintings in America were modern, and that the original "Diana and Her Nymphs," by Bellini, the "Annunciation," by Andrea del Sarto, and the "Portrait of Prince Leonardo of Rienzi," painter unknown, still hang upon the walls of the Milan palace of Count Battisto Saraseno. If only he could be sure—He thinks of the mining stock and sighs.

Then he consoles himself. There will be other stock transactions and accidents will happen! And it is always possible to give paintings to the art museum and thereby to gain great *kudos*. And perhaps—perhaps—

"Madame Demonnet's Jewels," the sixth of this series of stories of up-to-date smugglers that Virginia Middleton has written for SMITH'S, will appear in the April number.



Her Own

By R. O'Grady

Author of "Sister Stratton and Eternal Youth," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. HENRY

PLEASE don't say any more!" begged the woman.

Her companion, resting his boot on a board of the gate that separated them, seemed, in his quiet insistence, a part of the September evening. Against a background of russet stubble fields—vast, level, and rimmed by the coppery olive of an after-sunset sky, his figure loomed in dark, unyielding outline; but as he gazed into the anxious face of the woman, tenderness lurked in his smile.

"I settled it forever—last night," the woman hurried on. "I can't live through it again—all night long I thought about it." In spite of her rapid speech, her voice held a longing that seemed to invite the hurt she sought to fend.

While approaching cattle bells came

tap-tapping a wistful interlude, the man's smile faded; his face sobered, almost to somberness. Yet he spoke kindly.

"It's for your own good, Lizzie," he urged, placing his broad palm over the smaller, but no less knuckly, hand that trembled on the upper rail. "If you've kept awake all night to put your real self asleep, you need to be roused up; you don't know——"

"Yes, I do know!" Quietly she had withdrawn her hand from beneath his, clasping it with the other about a rough board of the wagon gate. There was something in this woman's personality—a simple fitness—that shared the unselfish spirit of the shorn fields all about. But the plainness of her attire did not leave her unadorned. A prairie breeze had played with the

abundant coil of her hair, now reflecting tawnily the western glow. Her blue-eyed gaze was vividly intent, as she continued:

"I lived it all, last night. It seemed as though I had gone—gone and left them! Mother would be worse—it might kill her, you know. And Gladys, with her things almost ready, would have to put off the wedding——"

"How old is Gladys?" interrupted the man.

"Most twenty-two."

"And Bert?"

"He's twenty-five."

"If they waited a year or so——" smiled the man.

"But they've been planning it for three months, and they've got part of their things."

In the pause that followed, the man's silence held a refutation of her argument so forceful that she resumed with lessening assurance:

"With Gladys married and gone, and father depending on hired help in the house—father——" A catch in her voice prevented her conclusion.

"I—I hope you'll have some one—a daughter—or some one as dutiful, when you get old, as you are to your own parents," her companion responded slowly.

There was no attempted pleasantry in this quiet remark. The speaker looked with stern frankness into the woman's troubled eyes, and the burning flame that slowly overspread his face was reflected by an answering flush in hers.

For an instant she could not speak. Gradually, the last faint touch of pink died out of her face, leaving it, where still unscathed by sunburn and freckles, a fair, soft white.

"I shan't—ever have—a daughter," she breathed.

The man said nothing, and when she finally spoke again, her voice had become gently persuasive.

"It isn't just the mere duty of caring for their wants, you see, Joe; it—it's something else. Father—he depends on me. He's fond of Gladys, but it isn't the same. He wouldn't know how to

get along—— It isn't the same." Her eyes widened, wistful to be understood.

"No, it ain't the same!" he agreed, catching up her words. "There ain't anybody the same as you; and, per'aps—per'aps there's some other man besides your father, that wouldn't know how to get along without you—some man that has the best part of his life to live yet——" There had come an almost savage passion into his voice. He brought his resting boot to the ground, then quickly he set both elbows on the fence, leaning toward her. "They don't any of your folks know what's in you, Lizzie," he added. "They ain't rightly able to 'preciate your kind of stuff."

His voice dropped on the last words, almost to a whisper. Dusk was falling. The copper of the sky line had paled in expectation of the coming moon. Insects buzzed sleepily in the stubble, and from the shelter of a straw stack came the intermittent, drowsy bell tinklings of resting cattle.

"Your father," pursued the man, rousing from the influence of the twilight mood, "your father's had you; that ought to be enough for any man—the right to give you to an honest fellow that wants to help you finish out your life, like it ought to be."

Lizzie shrank back, catching her breath. "Don't!" she fended, with a gesture of her hands to her temples.

Grimly, the man disregarded her plea. "You don't rightly care for me, Lizzie," he asserted, his eyes hardening with forced severity, "or else—you're afraid—afraid to stand up for your dues——"

"Afraid!" There was no pretense in her sudden indignation. "A coward? Can you say that, Joe Briggs?—you that's always helped me to keep our friendship just between ourselves?" The woman's voice was subdued, but her throat quivered, and her eyes glistened moistly. "You can't mean you've been expecting all along that we'd be married—move away—tell my sick mother and my old father I was going to leave them! Why didn't you say that before?"

Without surprise or resentment, the man looked at her, while he seemed to weigh well what he was about to speak.

"It would uv been easier," he admitted finally, "if we'd let it out from the start. But I thought if we did, I couldn't have you at all. I knew—I was sure Gladys'd break it off—some way. Gladys, you know, Lizzie"—he looked squarely at her—"Gladys is selfish."

Already overwrought, the woman was not to be persuaded by this unflinching truth. As she met his steady look, for an instant her eyes were like cut steel. She seemed to increase in stature.

"Gladys," she returned, in a level voice, "is my sister."

The man did not wince; he simply relaxed, throwing off the whole hopeless argument as a tired laborer doffs a superfluous coat.

"Not that way!" he propitiated, as she half turned. "Don't go that way! I'm off to-morrow. Let's say good-by."

With an impulse of tremulous kindness, she leaned toward him and reached a hand across the fence.

He took it, at the same time capturing its mate, and pressing together both her calloused and capable palms in his, he kept them an instant, then dropped them, and abruptly turned away.

As Lizzie hurried up the path that led around her father's big barn, and through the garden, she struggled for self-control. It was high time she should be at the house, and yet it would not do to let her mother suspect that anything unusual had taken place. Approaching noiselessly, in the shelter of a long grape trellis, she caught the voices of her family, assembled on the back porch. Even from a distance she recognized the somewhat exaggerated tones of mild excitement, and the sound of her own name, coming abruptly, made her pause beneath an overhanging vine.

Where was Lizzie? No wonder that her mother was growing anxious. It was quite dusk where the shadows were not already beginning to shift

before the reddish light of a rising moon. The missing daughter had collected herself to proceed, when the mention of another name again caused her to hesitate.

"Joe Briggs is going out to his claim," announced the high-pitched, girlish voice of Gladys. "I heard he was getting ready to leave right away. And," she added, with an interest that failed to conceal an envious note, "they say it's the finest piece of land in the whole White Gulch opening. Wish Bert had it!"

"You might better taken Joe," a querulous, feminine voice commented from a vine-sheltered corner of the veranda. "He's been willin' to be interested in this d'rection for quite a spell."

"I thought he'd been shinin' up to Lizzie!" This in a man's voice, good-natured and half deprecatory, with a chuckle that emphasized the facetiousness of his remark.

"Lizzie!" exploded Gladys, and she went off into an abandonment of girlish laughter. "Oh, pa! Lizzie—Lizzie—"

"Why not Lizzie?" echoed the father, with indulgent mimicry.

"The—idea!" Gladys was nearly choking. "I never—knew a fellow to look at Liz—with intentions!"

"Lizzie never was much for beaus," came in tremulous abatement from the snug porch corner, "or I guess the beaus never was much for Lizzie. Of course, Joe's always friendly to her, just like he is to me—it's nat'chal with him."

"Sho, now!" The genial enthusiasm of the father's protest indicated a zest for argument, beside which the championship of his elder daughter's claims took a secondary place. "Sho, now! Don't you remember when you wanted to lock Liz in her room all day, the time she stayed for supper at Nelson's, without askin' leave, and went to singin' school with Clyde? She was 'bout fifteen, wa'n't she? The next year after that you took a conniption, ma, 'cause she wanted t' go to a dancin' party with some other feller—I forget who—and you made me make her stay to home.

Oh, yes, I know," he pursued, jovially anticipating his wife's defense, "you changed your tacks, but that was when Gladys come along. You'd had plenty of time to get new notions—eh?"

The listener behind the grape trellis had not moved during this speech. The easy laugh that followed her father's challenge, and the wink that she knew to be its inevitable accompaniment, brought no responsive smile to her set lips.

Her mother was replying, half petulantly to the bandying reminiscence.

"Well, I guess you can't lay it all to me, pa. There's been no call, late years, for any of that discipline you claim. And if you're any ways worried, as you seem to be, about havin' a daughter left on your hands—" The invalid checked herself, as if suddenly ashamed of the asperity of her gibe.

"Oh, I ain't, I ain't!" propitiated the husband, with cordial benevolence. "Lizzie's welcome to a home here's long's she needs a home."

This declaration was followed by the stumping of the old man's boots and the dragging of his chair across the porch.

"I do wonder where Lizzie—"

The object of this fretful solicitude lost the conclusion of the speech as the delinquent brushed swiftly past the dew-wet leaves of the concealing trellis. In a few seconds, she had entered by the front door and glided through the house, in time to meet her father and his retarding chair at the rear.

"Hello, Lizzie!" the old man greeted with blustering heartiness. "Hello, girl! Been out?"

"Yes." She spoke shortly, as if afraid to trust her voice, but her father passed on, unnoticed.

"Lizzie—alive!" stewed the mother. "You been 'way over to Nelson's bare-headed in all this dew?"

"You're getting reckless, Liz," yawned Gladys. As she spoke, the young girl rose slowly. She was shorter than her sister, and of graceful figure, but even the softening effect of the moonlight failed to tone to prettiness

the exaggerated puff of blond hair about her slender face.

For once, Lizzie had no indulgent retort for her sister's patronizing humor. Going straight to the secluded corner of the porch, she addressed the invalid.

"Well, mother? No, don't try to get up. Father, help me pull in mother's chair, please?"

When thus, without effort on her part, the invalid had been helped into the house, and the lamps were lighted, there was an imperative question in her faded eyes; a protest trembled on her querulous lips, but died unspoken. As she continued to watch her daughter's quick, competent movements, there grew in her look and manner a sort of wondering diffidence, as if she were being served by a stranger, or some personage of whom she stood in awe. Still, there was no detail lacking in the daughter's familiar services; everything was performed as willingly and as expertly as ever, to the culminating attention of patting the covers and giving the good-night kiss.

But instead of sitting down with her father for the customary review of the day's work, or to discuss good-naturedly the latest folly of the neighbor on the north, who did not know how to farm, Lizzie hurried upstairs to her own room.

It was a back room, with dormer windows, where moonlight was now dappling in, sifted through fluttering dimity curtains. This room had always been a tranquil place, but never until to-night had it seemed to its occupant a refuge. As Lizzie entered, she quickly shut the door, and impulsively locked it. Her lifelong habits of mind, now become traitorous, must not follow her here.

A moment's hesitation, a vagueness, and then she turned toward the filtering moonlight and shrank down upon the window seat. Outwardly motionless, she waited for inward calm. With the real gone out of life, one must of necessity continue the material existence—must cling to the husk. During the past three months, her quiet hours had been devoted to plans for the wedding, the

marriage of Gladys, whom she had left by the dining-room lamp, measuring off some muslin and laces bought in town that day. She must perfect those plans—

Yet not to-night—let that go. She would try to think of something different for her mother's breakfast. It had always been her latest thought at night, and the one to which her awakening mind returned—this studying to beguile the invalid's capricious appetite. And while she endeavored to force her mind into its wonted groove, mechanically she unfastened her dress. She had taken off one of her shoes, the other hung listlessly, half off her foot. All at once she huddled herself together, as one under the lash. What was she? A slave to petty habit, that she should cringe under just chastisement? A feeling of humiliation possessed her—a stinging bitterness. Yet it was not the revelation of her family's attitude that formed the scourge; it was the truth of Joe's outspoken criticism. Joe—she must not think of him.

But try as she might, she could not put his words aside. They were goading her action. With impetuous movements, she readjusted her shoe, picked up the other, and put it on. Then she rose and crossed the room, whence a dim shadow from the glass of an old-fashioned bureau seemed to meet her waveringly. Bending close, she tried to catch her reflection in the soft light that streamed through the gauzy window curtains. In another moment, her lighted candle caused the moonbeams to vanish, ghostlike, before its flickering flame. From the mirror her face looked back at her—her face, and yet a strange one, for in the reflected gaze she read the dawn of something she could scarcely understand. Through the half-stunned tenseness of the features there flashed a vivid questioning of all the established relations of her life. The words of Joe Briggs kept repeating themselves with a deeper and still deeper significance: "Your folks ain't rightly able to appreciate your kind of

stuff." It was true, they did not know her; she had not known herself.

Or was it herself that impelled her now to quick, grim action? She set the candlestick abruptly upon the dresser, wrenched open a drawer, and began selecting garments therefrom. Her movements were true and decisive, though she worked with the desperate hurry of one to whom delay was dangerous. When she had dressed and packed a few things in a traveling bag that she took from the closet shelf, she put on a light cloak, and threw a thin scarf over her head. Then she extinguished the candle, went out, and softly closed the door of her room. A silvery streak, pouring in from a small, high window, lighted her noiseless footsteps down the stairs.

It was not yet bedtime, and Lizzie knew that her father was still reading his newspaper, opposite Gladys, at the dining-room table. There was no one to see her leave, but as if still impelled by the fear of her own indecision, she walked swiftly down the beaten front path to the gate.

For an instant she paused to breathe before she took the road, which ran like a straight, machine-made furrow, parting illimitable fields. To-night there seemed no boundary to the glistening expanse of the prairie, no interruption except the small, blotchy tree groups, which were one with their leafy shadows, and which the mystery of the night had transformed into purplish islands in a shimmering sea.

The nearest of these islands was Lizzie's harbor, where a farmhouse light pierced outward from the depths of the grove, clear and steady as a star. Only a half mile distant gleamed her beacon. A prophecy of frost, mingling with the smell of ripened, sunbaked earth, made the night exhilarant, but before she had gone two-thirds of the way, her quick pace lagged. Traversing the last few rods, she hesitated more and more, and when she reached the farmyard gate, she did not go in. Her moment of indecision, however, had come too late, for already her approach had been dis-



The man with the rifle butt across his knees had forgotten his work.

covered by at least one member of the household.

Through the trees and over the fence there came bounding toward her a great, shaggy dog. It required quick action—a word of authority, a touch of the woman's hand—to check the animal's ready and embarrassing herald of a friend's arrival.

Talking in an undertone to her proud escort, Lizzie followed him, half shrinkingly, toward the house. But her access of shyness was without cause, for having come within view of the lighted windows, she discovered, with a mingling of relief and disappointment, that

her coming had disturbed no one within. Retreat was still possible. Keeping herself within the protecting shadow of the trees, she tried to collect herself—to think. But her thoughts came as the sweep of a flood, while she quivered and shook, and clung to the big dog's collar strap, as a drowning soul to an anchor. He must not get away from her—must not tell Joe.

Joe! There he was. She could see him through the curtainless window of the summer kitchen, where he sat cleaning a rifle and getting it ready to pack away. As he worked by the unmitigated flare of a lamp with a tin reflector,

each gesture, every line of his figure, was brought out with poignant significance. The oddly helpless fumbling of his big, efficient hands, the misplacing of parts, and the taking them out, only to put them in wrong once more, affected the woman like stabbing wounds which were pricked deeper by a contrasting scene in another part of the house.

At the dining-room window the thin, yellow shade was drawn, and stenciled upon it were the shadowy outlines of Joe's brother Will, sitting across the table from Mrs. Will. While the young man read the paper aloud, his wife sewed. As the watcher's look reverted from this scene of quiet companionship to the solitary figure in the summer kitchen, her scarf fell to her shoulders, tweaked off by a gentle night breeze, and slipped unnoticed to the ground. The man with the rifle butt across his knees had forgotten his work. His elbow rested on a rough table at his side, and his head was in his hand.

Lizzie stood for an instant with lifted chin and bated breath, as a swift runner who pauses in a panic of indecision. Then she dropped to her knees beside the dog, and threw her arms around his great, shaggy neck, her heart pounding against his ear.

The recipient of this confidence, not satisfied with expressing the mute, though elaborate, sympathy of his vibrant tail, let out a short, emphatic bark, which left the ensuing quiet fairly teeming with suspense.

For an instant, Lizzie's heart stopped beating. Then the opening of the kitchen door brought her to her feet.

Against the blinding light within, Joe's rugged figure was blocked out dark and somber in the doorway. Yet, after a little, as he came out upon the stoop, peering into the adjacent shadows, his face showed pale in the soft radiance of the night.

The dog, leaping and barking joyously, bounded into view, and, in quaking acquiescence to the animal's announcement, the woman emerged from the shelter of the trees.

"Down, Nero!" ejaculated the man, who was descending the steps, half stumbling. And then, "Lizzie!" He reached out gropingly. In another instant her chilled hands were gripped in his firm, warm clasp. "Lizzie—you—you've come to me!"

With struggling breath she looked up at him and smiled, the tremulous smile that is the brave substitute for mutinied speech.



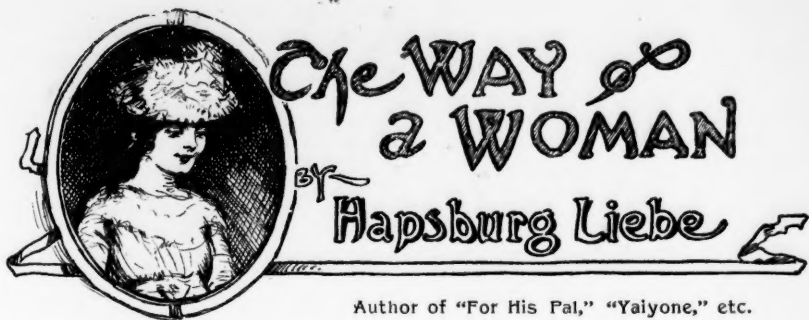
Diplomacy

BOOKER WASHINGTON tells of a time when he was traveling through the South with an old colored man. One of the cities proved so attractive that the old man forgot about train time until it was too late for him to walk to the station from uptown. Seeing a "hack" near by, he rushed up to it, and asked the driver to take him to the station. The driver was a white man, and he only laughed at the suggestion.

"You'd better hunt up another driver, uncle," he replied. "I'm a white man, you see. I couldn't drive a nigger in my hack."

"Oh, dat's all right, boss," explained the old man eagerly. "I only want to get to the station. Dat's all. You jump in on the back seat, and I'll jump in on the front seat and drive. See?"

The driver "saw," and "Uncle Joe" got his train.



Author of "For His Pal," "Yaiyone," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

SHE sat on the worn doorstep of her grandmother's cabin, which seemed very small against the long western slope of majestic Buffalo Mountain. Her chin was in her hands, her elbows on her knees; her deep, soft brown eyes were staring hard toward the one marigold that had bloomed in the narrow yard. There was to be a dance that night over at old Henry Lassiter's, in Beech Cove, and she had been invited by old Henry himself—and she had refused to accept the invitation because she had no better dress than a faded calico, and because she had neither shoes nor stockings. Ida Belle was a beautiful girl, with a soul of her own; and she had frequently been snubbed by other and envious girls who had shoes and stockings and nicer dresses than faded calicos.

And especially had she been snubbed by Louisa Beckett, who called herself the belle of the section. True, Ida Belle Snavelly had once put chewing gum in Louisa's hair; but surely there was nothing in that to remember for so long! Louisa, gossip was saying, was in a fair way to take by storm the heart of one Smith Sickles, a good-looking, but too smooth young stranger from beyond the State line.

"I'd give a million dollars if I could go!" Ida Belle said in a low and throbbing voice to the lone marigold. "I'd give a million dollars, what I would! Oh, if I jest had a pretty dress, and

shoes and stockin's, and a hat, and some things——"

Her voice had gone to a higher pitch, and her grandmother, a stooped and very gray little old woman, had heard her last and unfinished sentence. Granny Snavelly hobbled over to the doorway.

"You Idy Belle!" she reproved. "You jest quit that a-talkin' to yoreself, now, what you do! Hain't you heerd ten thousand times or more that when a person's a-talkin' to theirsself that they're a-talkin' to the devil? Now you jest quit that, now!"

Her tones were somewhat harsh, but Ida Belle did not take the slightest offense; she knew her grandmother had lost the dishcloth—a thing that Granny Snavelly frequently did, thanks to her absent-mindedness—and she knew that nothing on earth could make any woman madder than to lose a dishcloth.

Ida Belle rose to her bare feet, and one slender big toe began to wiggle itself into a knot hole in the worn doorstep. Her lithe and perfect young figure trembled from the war of emotion that raged within it. She began to play nervously with her slim, sunburned fingers.

"It's jest the wo'st kind o' luck, what it is!" she exclaimed hotly; and the wiggly big toe came out of the knot hole in order that the little foot to which it belonged might stamp petulantly. "Every other girl in this here whole

neighborhood will be thar," she continued, her voice vibrating. "They'll dance, and play skip-to-my-Lou and weavily-wheat and games like them. And I—I won't be thar! Granny Snavelly, afore goodness, I could jest die, I'm that mad!"

The old woman forgot the wayward dishrag. Her lined and poverty-hardened face softened into an affectionate smile. She had been a young woman once, and she still remembered her maidenly conquests back in old Nawth Ca'liner, in the good old days; and, in addition to that, she loved her one and only grandchild with a love that passed understanding. She drew the girl's dark head to one of her stooped shoulders, and began to stroke the thick, black hair—and real tears trickled from Ida Belle's soft brown eyes to the tender old bosom.

"Hush, hush, little gyrl," crooned Granny Snavelly. "It shore ort to be some comfort to you to know that you're twicet as good lookin', even barefooted and in calico, as anybody else on the whole mountain. And, as I've done and told you a million times or more, that's jest why edzactly that them thar other gyrls won't 'sociate with you, and not acause you're pore. Why, Idy Belle, I bet you could go to that thar dance over at old Henry's and take that thar Smith Sickles away from Louisy Beckett, barefooted like you are! But then you don't need no Smith Sickles, Idy Belle; Jimmy Mayfield, he's the best young man in this here country. Now you take my jedgment for it, acause I shore know. Jimmy, he's powerful pore, jest like us; but then he can work for you, and a man what'll work'll always git along. And when he axes you, Idy Belle, you jest up and tell him, 'Yes, sirree!'"

"He's done and axed me mighty nigh a million times," replied the girl, her head coming suddenly up from the old woman's shoulder. "But I wouldn't take him, acause I jest hain't a-goin' to be married to no man without a decent dress to my back, and a hat on my head, and shoes—and stockin's, too—

on my feet. And so that's *me*, Granny Snavelly."

"Well, well!" cackled the grandmother rather sharply. "And now if you hain't went and acted a plumb goose—now hain't you! Why, Idy Belle, and you've done went and turned Jimmy Mayfield down! You shore ort 'o be spanked——"

There came to interrupt her the shrill and long-drawn scream of the express train that went roaring past the cabin every afternoon. Both women turned to the doorway to watch the long arm of civilization shoot itself across the breast of the majestic Buffalo, a thing they were accustomed to doing.

Ida Belle shaded her eyes with a hand and watched the flying cars closely. She always caught glimpses of finely dressed women on that train. And then she held her breath with surprise—for a big leather suit case had fallen from one of the car windows to the ground beside the track! The train roared right on, with no sign whatever of stopping.

Ida Belle hurried down across the hundred yards that separated the old cabin from the railway, and picked up the leather suit case. It was very heavy, but she struggled back to the cabin with it; at which point Granny Snavelly was waiting eagerly.

"What in the name o' goodness!" exclaimed the old woman.

"I—I don't know," said the flushed and expectant girl. Her fingers were working nervously at the catch. After a minute spent in pushing it this way and that, she succeeded in getting the big suit case open. She clasped her hands, and rose to her feet, afraid to believe that she saw clearly.

Granny Snavelly stopped and began to finger a lovely, lace-trimmed, pale-blue organdie dress.

"Dresses—dresses!" came weakly from the lips of the girl.

"Dresses—well, I'd say dresses!" said the old woman. She was now on her knees, and her palsied hands were diving into the depths of the suit case. "Dresses, and shoes, and stockin's—brown shoes and stockin's—and brown



*"You Idy Belle!" she reproved. "You jast quit that a-talkin' to yereself,
now, what you do!"*

gloves—and a soft straw hat, and ribbons—and Lord 'a' mussy, Idy Belle, honey, a little bit o' everything else! Say, now, if this here hain't a streak o' luck for you, Idy Belle, then the devil he's a grasshopper!"

"Luck!" Idy Belle began to think, and her fine head bent dejectedly. "Granny, whoever lost that thar suit case is shore to come back after it."

"No, no, sirree!" declared Granny Snively. "A course not! The woman who lost that thar suit case couldn't remember whar she drapped it at to save her life—and then thar hain't no stop for thirty mile on the railroad. So you're shore to git to keep them thar dresses, Idy Belle."

Evidently assured, the little daughter of the Buffalo went to fingering the lacy things. Her eyes sparkled with a great joy, and her face was flushed happily.

"Will I go to the dance to-night over at old Henry's, granny?" she jubilated. "Jest will I? I shore will! And if I don't take you with me, it'll be acause you jest won't go at all. And you watch me take Smith Sickles away from Louisy Beckett, granny. Tra-la-la! I'll go a-marchin' in a little late, with my pale-blue skyrts ketched up in one hand—and I'll have on them thar brown gloves, and them thar brown stockin's and shoes."

"I'll shore go along with you, Idy Belle," smiled the grandmother. "It's been years and years since I went to a dance; but I'll go this time jest to be with you, honey. And you'd better start in to gittin' ready, acause we'll have to leave here at sundown if we git to old Henry's in time. Well, I'll jest let my pore lost dishrag go, and sort o' snoop up my hair a bit."

She hastened across the creaking floor to a cracked mirror; and her grandchild thought her step seemed twenty years younger than it had been an hour before.

When the lower edge of the red sun was clipping at the fringe of pines that topped the neighbor mountain to the westward, Jim Mayfield came walking up between the two rows of budding

marigolds that led from the gate to the doorstep. He was clean-limbed and straight and sunburned; he was dressed very poorly, but very neatly; his black eyes were smiling as much as his lips.

"Oh, Idy Belle!" he called at the door—which was closed.

"What you want, Jim?"

Idy Belle hastened to open the door. She was dressed in the pale-blue organdie, the russet stockings and shoes, and the soft straw turban sat the least bit jauntily on her finely shaped head. She watched Jim closely in order to see just how he would take it.

Jim Mayfield, accustomed as he was to seeing his sweetheart barefoot and clad in a faded calico, seemed about to sink to the ground. His eyes grew wide, then sober, and finally a look that savored of apprehension crossed his strong, tanned face.

"Why, Idy Belle!" he exclaimed. He stooped and picked up the hem of the pale-blue organdie. Then he remembered, and dropped it. "Idy Belle, in the name o' goodness, whar did you git all o' them thar fine clo'es at?"

The girl smiled somewhat whimsically. "I'll tell you some time, Jim," she said. She put her gloved hands lightly on his broad shoulders, and went on: "I'm a-goin' to the dance over at old Henry's to-night, Jim; but I cain't let you go with me. Granny's a-goin' with me. And I cain't have you for a pardner, Jim."

Jim Mayfield went pale, and looked hurt. Had Idy Belle watched his face for another moment, doubtless she would have changed her plans; but she lowered her gaze, and stood idly playing with her slim fingers.

Jim Mayfield turned and walked slowly down to the gate. From there he called back as cordially as he could:

"I shore hope you'll have a good time, Idy Belle."

He went slowly out to the laurel-lined path, which led straight for Beech Cove.

Idy Belle turned back to her grandmother, that the old woman might finish buttoning the russet gloves. She was sorry to turn the cold shoulder to

the man who had been her sweetheart since she could remember; but she just had to be foot-loose and free to take Smith Sickles from Louisa Beckett. Louisa had so long delighted in turning up her freckled nose at Ida Belle's poverty that Ida Belle, for the sake of a triumph, was willing to wound the heart of the man she loved above all else in the world.

For that is the way of a woman.

II.

When darkness had settled down quietly over Beech Cove, a broad gash in the north side of the great Buffalo, the majority of old Henry Lassiter's guests had arrived, and were sitting on the benches and chairs that lined the log walls of the biggest of the cabin's three rooms. On the high, smoked mantel two small oil lamps burned; on a shelf at the opposite end of the room a pair of tallow candles flickered. Before the wide, fireless fireplace sat old Bib Tarvin with his black and beribboned fiddle, his bewhiskered face wearing the merry smile peculiar to old-time fiddlers. At his side sat Jim Mayfield, a banjo in his lap; if he couldn't be Ida Belle's partner during the jollifications of the evening, he could at least contribute to her pleasure, and that was the stripe of Jim Mayfield. Not, however, that he was an old-family-horse sort of a fellow; it was frequently said



He stooped and picked up the hem of the pale-blue organdie.

of the Mayfields that they would tackle Hades with half a bucket of water if they thought the cause was just.

Old Henry Lassiter, very lanky and very gray, rose to his feet, scolded a long-eared hound from the room, and held up his hand for silence. The hum of conversation wavered, then died out altogether.

"Gentlemen and ladies, choose yore pardners!" cried old Henry.

Immediately there was a scuffling of feet. Half a dozen young mountain-

eers in their best attire pushed forward to thwart the designs of Smith Sickles, the smooth, dark, black-mustached stranger from Nawth Ca'liner. Louisa Beckett, however, smiled proudly and turned to give her arm to Sickles—who accepted the arm and led its owner to a place against the wall.

"Bib, cut loose on that thar fiddle," ordered old Henry; "and give us a chune that'll make our hearts git down into our feet!"

Now if there's anything that will make a mountaineer dance at a dance, it's "Old Joe Clark"—and Bib Tarvin knew it. Also, Bib knew that it was old Henry Lassiter's favorite of all airs; in fact, he had himself heard old Henry say that he wanted some kind soul to steal into the graveyard after he was gone and play that over his tomb. So Bib raised a well-rosined bow and cut loose on "Old Joe Clark." Jim Mayfield's strong fingers swept the strings of the banjo in a jangling, but not discordant, accompaniment—chuckaluck, chuckaluck, chuckalum, chuckalum—like that.

The floor began to vibrate, and the walls to ring with laughter and snatches of the old song. Long Tom Butts, yellow-whiskered and six feet four, whose main boast was that he could jump into the air and kick his heels together thrice before alighting, frequently gave an exhibition of his prowess without losing the step. This deprived Long Tom of the pleasure of a partner; but there was one odd man anyway, and Long Tom didn't especially care.

Old Henry's voice rang out:

"Swing yo' pardner!"

His booted feet never failed to mark time with the music. It was all he could do to keep from taking the arm of his gray old wife and capering forth into the maze of couples on the floor.

And then there happened something that none of those present have forgotten or will ever forget.

There entered by the open doorway two women. One of them was old, and stooped, and decrepit, but broadly smiling; the other was young, and

beautiful, and winsome, and dressed as none of the dancers had ever been able to dress. Ida Belle walked proudly to the center of the floor and stopped. The music ceased. The feet of the dancers became still.

Ida Belle, as calm as she ever was in her life, stepped to a chair and hung her turban on its back. Then she turned and began to survey the others through eyes that had assumed a slightly bored expression—and one gloved hand was holding her pale-blue organdie skirt, just as she had said she would hold it. And when her eyes finally alighted on those of the well-dressed young stranger from Nawth Ca'liner, she smiled and nodded her fine little head.

Smith Sickles did not hesitate to throw off Louisa Beckett's arm. He approached the dream of a woman who stood in the center of the floor.

"Can I dance with you?" he asked.

And the answer came readily. "You shore can!"

Ida Belle tilted her nose and passed a haughty and triumphant smile to Louisa Beckett before she was led away to a place against the wall. The crestfallen and utterly beaten Louisa turned ashen and stared her hate. Ida Belle looked toward the two musicians and nodded; and they, interpreting her signal correctly, began to play "Old Joe Clark" as they had never played it before.

And Jim Mayfield's face was full of pain in spite of his brave attempt to make it otherwise.

Louisa Beckett refused to dance more. She looked toward Ida Belle Snavelly and tried to turn up her nose; but she couldn't—she was too weak. She walked sluggishly from the room to the darkness outside, where she tore down the pink ribbon that had adorned her black hair and shredded it in her angry fingers.

"Right hands up and circle four!" cried old Henry Lassiter from his position beside the fiddler. His face was beaming with the spirit of the occasion. He turned his eyes toward old Granny Snavelly's corner, and saw that the old

woman was keeping time with both feet. And he further noticed as he cried: "Swing yo' pardner!" that the old woman's cheeks each wore a splotch of pink.

So old Henry pranced on his hard-heeled boots to Granny Snavelly's side, took her by the arm, and lifted her to her feet, and capered across the floor twice with her—which was the special feature of the evening, with the exception of the advent of Ida Belle in her russet shoes and stockings, her pale-blue organdie, and her soft straw turban.

Ida Belle danced like the little backwoods queen she was. Her dark face was flushed prettily, and her red lips throbbled with beauty, and sweetness, and triumph, and her soft brown eyes smiled, and smiled, and smiled. And yet those same soft brown eyes frequently wandered to the down-turned face of the young man who played the banjo.

Louisa Beckett, her hair tangled, and her face pale with defeat and hate, stood at a little window. She was in the act of clenching her fist and shaking it at a certain couple who were dancing as though they could dance on forever, when the hand of a strange man came down gently on her shoulder.

She turned, and saw in the light that came through the window a pair of determined gray eyes peering hard toward her.

"Go in there," requested the stranger, "and tell Jim Mayfield to come out here."

"Why?"

"Never mind that. Please oblige me."

Jim Mayfield came, leaving Bib Tarvin to play on alone. There was a look of wonderment on his features as he approached the tall man who stood in the darkness beside the lighted window.

"Did you want to see me?" he asked.

With a dexterity that was almost unbelievable, the stranger seized both of Jim Mayfield's wrists and locked them together with a pair of handcuffs.

"Yes," said the sheriff of the county, "I wanted to see you. You're under

arrest, and you're going with me to town."

"But—but what did I do?" breathed Mayfield.

"You know very well what you did," said the officer; and he began to lead his prisoner down a narrow, laurel-bordered path.

Louisa Beckett, when she had come to herself, rushed into the dance room and cried out her alarming tidings loudly. The fiddle stopped. The dancers turned their eyes toward Louisa. Then they rushed out into the night to find out what it was that Jim Mayfield had done. Ida Belle Snavelly was the first to get out at the doorway.

And Ida Belle Snavelly was the only one to catch up with the sheriff and Jim Mayfield. They had turned from the path, and were threading their way across a shallow, dark ravine. Ida Belle clung to the officer's arm, holding him back.

"What was it Jim done?" she panted.

"Jim robbed a store over at Lylesville, and took away a suit case filled with women toggery," the sheriff answered kindly. He pulled his arm from the girl's hands, and hurried on.

Ida Belle was too weak even to remonstrate. She sank down to the leaf-carpeted ground, a pitifully small heap in the darkness of the mountain night. She knew all, now; Jim had thrown the suit case from the car window, and when the train had slowed down on a grade some two miles from her grandmother's cabin, he had swung himself off. So she had snubbed Jim, after he had stolen something he could not buy for her—and she hadn't even told him the reason she had for snubbing him! She seized the pale-blue organdie dress at the throat, minded to tear it away. But she couldn't disrobe herself there.

Only one thing was left for her to do. She again fell forward to the soft leaf carpet, there in the darkness among the thick, black laurels, and wept heartbrokenly for her Jim Mayfield.

For that is the way of a woman.



So old Henry pranced on his hard-heeled boots to Granny Snavelly's side, and capered across the floor twice with her.

III.

On an afternoon a little more than a week after the dance at old Henry Lassiter's, Granny Snavelly was delivering a lecture to Ida Belle, who, garbed in one of her poor, faded calicos and barefoot, sat rather low on the doorstep. The old woman was a little harsh—but she had again lost track of her dishcloth, which, of course, had something to do with it.

"And I done told you a thousand

times, Idy Belle, you're shore a-treat-in' pore Jimmy Mayfield mean and low-down. To think that he liked you well enough to do what he done for you, and then for you to go a-gallivantin' around with that thar Smith Sickles! And pore Jimmy, him a-layin' down thar at Lylesville in the jail house! It shore do git the best o' me, Idy Belle Snavelly. Smith Sickles is good lookin', and he's from Nawth Ca'liner, and it shore ort 'o recommend him;

but it don't, acause he's one o' these here fellers who talks his 'head off—and no man what talks his head off a-braggin' about hisself and what he's done is wo'th enough good powder and lead to blow his brains out. So thar, and you can take that, Idy Belle Snavelly! Now, Idy Belle, you jest git up offen that thar step and come on in this here house and help me hunt that thar dratted old dishrag, now!"

Ida Belle turned her head and looked toward her irate grandparent, and a slow smile crossed her face.

"What's that you've got stuck in yore apron pocket, granny?"

It was the dishrag for which the absent-minded old woman had been hunting high and low. Granny Snavelly snorted, and went back into the cabin.

There was a step at the gate. Ida Belle turned her head to see the dark and too smooth Smith Sickles. He stood with one elbow hung over one of the rotting posts, and his fingers were busily twirling at his black mustaches.

"Good evenin', Idy Belle," he greeted smilingly.

"Why, howdy do, Mr. Sickles, and won't you come in?" She started to pull her faded dress down over her bare feet, but on second thought loosed the hem of the garment and rose; she plucked one of the half-dozen marigolds that had bloomed in the narrow yard, and carried it to the man at the gate.

"That thar shore is a pretty flower," declared Mr. Sickles, as its stem was pulled deftly through the buttonhole in his lapel. "Well," he went on hopefully, "I—I've come to have yore answer. Is it to be yes, or no?"

Ida Belle began to play nervously with her slim, tanned fingers. Her soft brown eyes were staring toward one of her wiggly big toes.

"I can give you a good home, and plenty o' good clo'es, Idy Belle," pursued Mr. Sickles; "and I shore won't have to turn thief to git 'em for you."

The girl's face flushed angrily, but she choked back the words that

crowded themselves to her tongue, and replied:

"No, I reckon you wouldn't have to steal nothin' for me." She continued: "Pore Jim Mayfield—how long d' you reckon they'll keep him in jail?"

"About ten year," answered the too smooth Smith Sickles, with a forced look of compassion. "Idy Belle, you shorely hain't a-lovin' no blamed thief like him!" The look of compassion had faded.

Ida Belle Snavelly looked up and smiled bewitchingly.

"No—a course I hain't," she assured Mr. Sickles. "But I couldn't help a-feelin' sorry for Jim acause he done what he done for me. And he hain't got a dollar to his name to hire a lawyer with—and neither has his folks."

Smith Sickles curled his mouth contemptuously. "He don't need no lawyer, Mayfield don't. A man who will steal under any sarcumstances don't deserve nothin' but to be kept ahind o' the bars until he's cyored. A course, Idy Belle, he done what he done for you; but that don't make it anythin' but stealin'."

"I—I guess you must be right," replied Ida Belle, after a moment of heavy and utter silence. "About that thar answer I was to give you. Are you shore that you'd always love me, and always be good to me, jest as you are now? And would you be willin' to let granny live with us, and would you take good keer o' her as well as me?"

"Why, shore!" declared the smooth, dark man from Nawth Ca'liner.

After another silent moment had passed, the girl looked her suitor squarely in the eye, and told him:

"Then you come a-past here in the mornin', and I'll be ready to go with you to the preacher's, whar we'll be married."

Smith Sickles leaned forward, his eyes brutish and gloating.

"Kiss me, little Idy Belle," he said.

But the girl drew firmly away from the smiling face.

"No—wait," she replied quickly, blushing deeply. "Wait. I hain't



There was the click of manacles, and Smith Sickles turned a face full of mingled defeat and hatred toward the little daughter of the big and majestic Buffalo Mountain.

never kissed no man, and I never will kiss any man until he belongs to me and me to him. When we're married, I'll let you kiss me a million times—if you want to."

"By gyar," said Smith Sickles,

one hand twirling at his black mustaches, "I'll want to! So good-by until mornin', Idy Belle."

"Good-by until mornin'."

When the next rising sun was well into the edge of the day, the pair set

out for Lylesville afoot—for there were neither horses nor vehicles in the neighborhood, and the railway offered them no conveniences, whatever. It was eighteen good miles, but Ida Belle was accustomed to walking, and she figured that by taking plenty of time they could reach their journey's end at least by nightfall. She was attired in the pale-blue organdie, the soft straw turban, and the russet shoes and stockings. Smith Sickles wore the loudly striped suit he had worn at the dance, and there was a fresh marigold in the buttonhole of his left coat lapel.

When the morning was gone, and the sun came straight down, Sickles removed his coat and his celluloid collar that he might be more comfortable. Thereupon, Ida Belle removed her russet shoes and stockings, and gave them to Sickles to carry. Then they moved on toward Lylesville.

It was near night when they reached the outskirts of the little, slow-going town. Ida Belle sat down at the side of a cool, shaded lane, with the songs of mocking birds and the scent of honeysuckles about her, and put on her russet shoes and stockings, and while she did that, Smith Sickles donned his striped coat, his celluloid collar, and his already tied tie. Then they walked on and came to a street dotted with puzzling lights on posts, and down that street a few blocks Ida Belle halted before an old house of brick, which set well back in a grove of gnarled maples.

"This is whar the preacher he lives at," she said, halting her companion by laying one hand on his arm. "You wait here, Smith, honey, and I'll see if he's at home."

"I'm a-waitin'," replied Sickles, leaning wearily against one of the stone gateposts.

After a moment spent in conversing with a tall, elderly woman who had answered the summons at the door, Ida Belle turned and called her suitor. Sickles went in a swaggering gait up the worn brick walk, and joined the girl on the veranda. The tall woman then ushered the couple into a cozy, old-fashioned parlor, which boasted much

heavily upholstered furniture, a family birth-and-death record in an oaken frame, an organ, and a bouquet of wax flowers under a glass.

"Just a minute," smiled the tall woman and disappeared.

"And so you'll soon be Mis' Smith Sickles," jubilated the too smooth person from Nawth Ca'liner as he dropped into a chair and stretched his legs out before him. "Say, now, but jest won't that thief of a Jim Mayfield be mad when he hears about this!"

"And what about Louisy Beckett?" Ida Belle smiled triumphantly. "Maybe Louisy won't cut some high capers when she knows about me a-gittin' you for a husband!"

There entered the room a man. He was tall and lanky. His hair was gray at the temples. His jaw was square. His gray eyes were determined. He had no book in his hand—but a big, blued revolver, the same being trained straight toward Smith Sickles. In short, it was the same man who had arrested Jim Mayfield.

"You're wanted in North Carolina, I believe," came in the sheriff's low, businesslike voice, "for shooting up a dance and wounding several persons."

There was the click of manacles, and Smith Sickles turned a face full of mingled defeat and hatred toward the little daughter of the big and majestic Buffalo Mountain.

"You talked too much, Mr. Smith Sickles," Ida Belle said wearily. "You was a fool to tell me that thar was a reward o' two hundred dollars out for you back in Nawth Ca'liner. I hated to fool you like I done; but—but I needed the money to hire a lawyer to defend Jim Mayfield, the man who loved me well enough to steal the things for me which he was too pore to buy."

And she got the money, and hired a lawyer—and the lawyer handed over such a talk that the judge, and the jury, and the prosecuting attorney, and the man who owned the store that Jim had robbed found it impossible to separate the two devoted, if primitive, hearts.

They came in sight of old Granny

Snavelly's cabin on the Buffalo at sundown on the day following the trial, did Mr. and Mrs. James Mayfield. Old Granny Snavelly was standing in the doorway watching for them, one palsied hand shading her eyes, the other holding tightly to a dishrag.

"I jest cain't see," declared James Mayfield, as they toiled up the laurel-bordered path, both barefoot, "how I'm ever a-goin' to be good enough to you, Idy Belle, honey. You lied for me, and you trusted yoreself all the

way to town with that thar mean Smith Sickles for me, and you cried for me in co't, and you begged and begged for me——"

"Hush, Jim," interrupted the weary, but happy, Mrs. Mayfield. "You understood my sufferin', and you loved me well enough to steal for me. And for you I'd do ten thousand times as much as I done, darlin' Jim!"

There was the light of truth in her soft brown eyes. For that is the way of a woman.



The Village Picture Show

LAST night red Indians rode for us
 Across the mimic plain;
 A trooper man bestrode for us
 A steed with tossing mane,
 Then hey for glorious race and wild
 To claim the white man's stolen child!
 And how the mother wept and smiled
 When all came right again!

An Eastern port then flashed in view,
 Where, daubed with monster eyes,
 A dumpy junk came trudging through
 Wee craft like dragon flies.
 Delicious, over tropic seas,
 The swinging fringes of the trees
 Dipped low, and tangled in the breeze
 That teased them hoyden-wise.

To-day—O bright illusion gone!
 O glamour stripped aside!
 The place of wonders stands alone,
 Bereft and shorn of pride.
 A dangling film, an idle crank,
 Stray nutshells on the seats of plank,
 Remind us how we thrilled and shrank
 Through moments glorified.

Sir Stroller, as your tent you strike,
 New camping grounds to find,
 We'll bid you Godspeed if you like,
 And pray your world be kind.
 Know that, about our firelog's cheer,
 We'll talk of what you wrought us here.
 Ah, picture man with mystic gear,
 How much you leave behind!

—RHEEM DOUGLAS.



THE MAN INSIDE

by Natalie Sumner Lincoln

Author of "The Trevor Case," "The Lost Despatch," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.*

Cynthia Carew, just returned from a brilliant ball in Washington, is prostrated with shock and grief upon the discovery of the old butler, Joshua, that her carriage escort has been the dead body of her distinguished uncle, Senator James Carew, who has been apparently stabbed with a small desk file. Suspicion is first cast upon the coachman, Hamilton, who is arrested. The other members of the dead senator's household are his widowed sister, Mrs. Winthrop, and her stepson, Philip Winthrop, who has acted as secretary to Senator Carew. The latter is a dissipated, hot-tempered, young man, and is suspected of some knowledge of the crime. Eleanor Thornton, Cynthia's closest friend, with her maid, Annette, comes to stay with Cynthia until after the funeral. She induces her uncle, Col. Dana Thornton, a well-known lawyer, to represent Mrs. Winthrop's investigation into the crime. The detective, Brett, working on the case, is assisted by Douglas Hunter, a young friend of Senator Carew's just returned from official service in Japan. He is much interested in Eleanor Thornton. In an interview with the secretary of state and Secretary Wyndham of the Navy, he divulges important news concerning recent movements of Japan's navy, and learns that the plans of two new American dreadnaughts have been stolen that morning from Secretary Wyndham's desk, probably by a mysterious Spaniard who had forced his way into the office, and collapsed in a fit upon learning of Senator Carew's death. Senator Carew had been secretary of the foreign relations committee; international complications seem imminent, and in some way to account for his murder.

CHAPTER XI.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

PHILIP WINTHROP moved restlessly in bed, then lay still, for a feeling of deadly nausea almost overcame him. Half an hour passed, and, feeling better, he raised his hand and felt his throbbing temples. Wearily he tried to collect his ideas, but all appeared confused.

What was it that he had promised? Slowly his torpid conscience awoke. "For value received"—the phrase held a double meaning that penetrated even his dulled senses. He could not afford to lie there like a bump on a log any longer. He opened his eyes; apparently it was late, for the room was in total darkness, save for a streak of light that came from the half-open hall door.

With an effort, Philip raised himself

on his elbow, and glanced about him, but even that slight exertion was too much in his weakened state, and, with a groan, he slid back on the pillows. For some seconds he lay without moving, but the yellow patch of light troubled him, and he rolled over on his side, facing the wall. He struggled apathetically to piece together the occurrences of the past few days. Suddenly he caught the sound of a light step, and the swish of skirts approaching his bed.

The next instant a glass was thrust under his nose and placed gently against his mouth. He raised his hand, and pushed the glass away from him. "G'way," he stammered faintly. "Leave me 'lone!"

Apparently no attention was paid to his request, for the glass was again placed at his lips. Again he tried to thrust it from him, but his feeble ef-

*The first installment of "The Man Inside" appeared in the February number of SMITH'S.

forts made no impression against the strong wrist. His resistance lasted only a few minutes, then his weaker will surrendered to the stronger, and he sipped the medicine obediently, after which the glass was withdrawn.

Downstairs in the library, three men sat smoking around the large desk table.

"I am glad you could join us to-night, Colonel Thornton," said Brett, as he placed one of the ash trays conveniently near the lawyer. "Three heads are better than one, and it is time we got together and discussed certain features of this case."

"Quite right. It will help us to a clearer understanding," agreed the colonel.

"Then suppose, Mr. Hunter, that you first tell us any theories that you may have formed."

Douglas dropped the paper cutter he was balancing in his hand, and, leaning on the table, looked seriously at his companions.

"I think," he said deliberately, "that Philip Winthrop has a guilty knowledge of Senator Carew's death, if he is not the actual murderer."

"Your reasons?" demanded Colonel Thornton.

"There was bad blood between them. That has been proved," Douglas picked his words with care. "Possibly the quarrel was brought about because Senator Carew had found out something discreditable in Philip Winthrop's past. He had a responsible position as the senator's private secretary, and there is a chance he betrayed his trust."

"In what way?" asked Brett eagerly.

"It may be that he is in the pay of some lobby anxious to influence important legislation," Douglas, mindful of the secretary of state's caution, was feeling his way with care.

"Senator Carew was the last man to be influenced by such a character as Philip Winthrop," said Thornton contemptuously.

"He may not have tried to do so, but simply have betrayed valuable information of committee plans and caucus."

"That may be," acknowledged Thornton, "particularly as I am told that Philip has been spending a great deal of money lately—far more than his salary would warrant."

"Value received," Douglas shrugged his shoulders expressively. "I have also found out that Hamilton, the coachman, is a Jamaican negro, his real name being Samuel Hamilton Quesada, and that he was brought here nearly two years ago by young Winthrop, when he returned from a visit to Jamaica. The senator took him into his employ at Winthrop's request and recommendation."

"And your theory is——" questioned Brett sharply.

"That Winthrop either bribed Hamilton to kill Senator Carew, or to help him after he, Winthrop, had committed the murder. You must remember," he added hastily, as Brett started to speak, "the Jamaican negro has a revengeful disposition when roused, and I have no doubt Senator Carew gave him merry hell when he discharged him Monday afternoon, and Hamilton was ready to risk everything to get even."

Brett shook his head. "How did Senator Carew get into that carriage?" he asked doubtfully.

"Hamilton probably lied when he said he did not first stop at this house on his way to the ball to bring Miss Carew home. Or perhaps Winthrop came into this room, found Senator Carew busy writing, stole up behind him, seized the letter file, and stabbed him with it."

Again Brett shook his head. "If that had been the case, the senator would have been stabbed in the back; whereas he was stabbed directly over the heart, and whoever committed the crime was facing him."

"Well, that is not impossible," argued Douglas. "Winthrop may have stood near the senator's chair and talked to him for a few minutes without the latter suspecting danger—may have even picked up the letter file—a harmless thing to do under ordinary circumstances—and without warning thrust it into the senator's chest."

"And afterward?" questioned Brett. "Afterward—Winthrop may have stepped into the hall, found no one there, tiptoed into the room again, telephoned"—pointing to the desk instrument—"out to the stable, and told Hamilton to drive at once to the front door. The sound of the horses' hoofs was probably drowned by the heavy rain, so no one in the house would have heard the carriage enter the porte-cochère, but"—impressively—"Winthrop, from this window, could see its arrival. He probably stepped into the hall again, found the coast clear, opened the front door, dashed back, picked up Senator Carew, who was much smaller than he, carried him out, and placed him inside the carriage. Hamilton had been drinking, and was perhaps too befogged to notice anything unusual, and when Winthrop slammed the carriage door, he probably drove off none the wiser."

"Much as I dislike Philip Winthrop, I do not think him capable of committing murder," said Colonel Thornton slowly. "Secondly, I believe, no matter how secretly you think the murder was planned, that if Philip were guilty, Mrs. Winthrop would have some inkling of it, and if their quarrel had been so serious, she would have known it, and would naturally try to hush matters up. Instead of which, she is the first to offer a reward, a large reward, mind you. It is not within reason that she would have done such a thing had she the faintest idea that Philip was the murderer."

"I beg your pardon. Philip is not her son. There may be no love lost between them."

"Good God! What a suggestion! You don't mean to insinuate that she offered that reward, knowing her stepson might be guilty?" Thornton looked at Douglas with sudden horror.

For reply Douglas nodded quietly.

"No, no, Douglas; you are shining up the wrong tree. I have known Mrs. Winthrop for over fifteen years; she wouldn't injure a fly, let alone try to trap one whom she loves as her own flesh and blood. She was devoted to

her husband, and for his sake legally adopted Philip and brought him up as her own son; in fact, she was entirely too indulgent and generous, which has proved his downfall. He hates work like a nigger."

"Mr. Hunter has drawn a strong case against Philip Winthrop, except for one serious flaw," broke in Brett, who had been a silent listener to their argument. "And that is that Philip Winthrop was at the Alibi Club on Monday evening. A number of reputable men are willing to swear to that. It is certain that he could not have been in two places at once. Secondly, Mrs. Winthrop swears that her brother spent Monday evening away from this house." Brett leaned forward and spoke impressively. "Senator Carew was killed by another hand than Philip Winthrop's."

"By whose hand?" asked Thornton and Douglas simultaneously.

"Captain Frederick Lane."

"Fred Lane, of the engineer corps?" ejaculated Thornton, much astonished, while Douglas looked as blank as he felt.

"Yes, sir."

"Bah! You're mad!"

"Just a moment." Brett held up a protesting hand. "Don't condemn my theory unheard. I seemed up against a blank wall in this house, so to-day I started an investigation at the other end—that is, at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. James Owen, where Miss Cynthia Carew attended a dance on Monday night."

"Go on," urged Douglas, as Brett stopped and glanced behind him to see that the hall door was closed.

"I called on Mrs. Owen. She was not inclined to be communicative, but her daughter, Miss Alice Owen, who came in during our interview, let the cat out of the bag, and Mrs. Owen had to tell then what she knew, which was this: That Captain Lane and Miss Carew were engaged—" A muttered word escaped Colonel Thornton, and Brett turned to him instantly. "I beg pardon—did you speak?"

"No," growled the colonel.

"Apparently they had planned to an-

nounce the engagement at the dance," resumed Brett. "Anyway, Miss Owen, who already knew of it, was told by Miss Carew that her uncle, the senator, had refused to give his consent, and had threatened to turn her out of doors if she did not instantly break the engagement."

"Poor Cynthia! Poor little girl!" murmured Thornton. "I am very fond of her, and her father was my most intimate friend. It was beastly of Carew to issue such an ultimatum. She is entirely dependent upon him."

"So Miss Owen thought. Miss Carew confided her troubles to her on her arrival. Miss Owen said that while they were sitting in the library, Captain Lane came in, looking very dejected, and she immediately got up to leave the lovers together. Before leaving the room, however, she overheard Lane tell Miss Carew that he had just seen her uncle, hoping to persuade him to reconsider his refusal, but that he had flatly refused to do so in the most insulting terms."

"Upon my word, for a mild-tempered man, Carew managed to have plenty of quarrels on his hands on Monday!" exclaimed Thornton.

"And the last one undoubtedly brought about his death." Brett spoke so positively that Douglas hitched his chair nearer in his excitement. "After I had finished my interview with Mrs. Owen, I asked permission to question her servants. The footman told me that Miss Carew left the dance earlier than the other guests, and that she had to wait a long time for her carriage. He said he called her carriage check number repeatedly, and with no result. Finally Captain Lane, becoming impatient, put on his overcoat and hat, and walked down the street, searching for Miss Carew's carriage."

"And you think——" broke in Douglas.

"That Captain Lane found not only the carriage, but the senator sitting in it, and seized the opportunity to punish him for his deviltry to the girl he loved."

A long pause followed as Colonel

Thornton and Douglas sat thinking over Brett's startling news.

"Where did he get the weapon?" inquired Douglas finally.

"Out of Mrs. Owen's library, of course. He may have picked it up in a fit of absent-mindedness and carried it with him."

"Did the footman or butler notice anything in his hand when he left the house?" questioned Thornton.

"I asked them, and they declared that he carried an umbrella in his left hand, but that they had not noticed whether he was holding anything in his right hand or not. The footman declared that it was raining so hard that it was impossible to see anything clearly. They both said Captain Lane was some fifteen minutes returning to the house."

"Did he find the carriage?"

"He told the footman that he hadn't, and ordered him to keep calling the number, which he did, and soon after the carriage drove up."

"Of all the cold-blooded propositions!" ejaculated Douglas. "Do you honestly mean that you think Lane deliberately put the girl he loved into the carriage to sit beside the man he had just murdered?"

"I do," firmly, "and I stake my reputation as a detective that Captain Lane is guilty. You were with me, Mr. Hunter, when I overheard Miss Carew exclaim, as Miss Thornton entered her bedroom on Tuesday: 'They quarreled, Eleanor, they quarreled.'"

"She may not have been alluding to Captain Lane," declared Douglas stoutly. "She may have referred to Philip Winthrop. He also quarreled with Senator Carew."

"Philip is very much in love with Cynthia, and wishes to marry her," volunteered Thornton quietly.

"Is that why Senator Carew objected to her engagement to Captain Lane?" asked Brett. "Did he wish her to marry Philip Winthrop?"

"I never heard that he did." Thornton paused and reflected a moment. "I might as well tell you, for you will probably hear it from some one else eventually, that there has been a feud of

long standing between the Lanes and Carews."

Douglas whistled. "A Montague and Capulet affair?" he inquired.

"Exactly. Carew and old Governor Lane were political rivals. Lord, how they hated each other! They almost tore Maryland asunder when running for the governorship, which Lane won by a few votes. Carew charged fraud, which, however, was never proved. They cherished their animosity to the day of Governor Lane's death, and I can imagine it was a terrible shock to Carew to find that his dearly loved niece wanted to marry the governor's son."

"What sort of a fellow is Lane?" asked Douglas.

"A fine specimen of the American gentleman," exclaimed Thornton enthusiastically; "a soldier, every inch of him, brave to a fault. He has twice been mentioned in orders for gallant conduct—just the sort of fellow a romantic young girl like Cynthia would fall head over heels in love with."

"In naming his virtues, you have overlooked his greatest fault," said Brett calmly. "He has a fiendish temper, and, when provoked, falls into the most insane rages, so his brother officers tell me."

"You are making out a black case against him," agreed Douglas; "but there is one point you seem to have overlooked, and that is did the letter file used to kill Senator Carew belong to Mrs. Owen?"

"That is the one flaw in my case," acknowledged Brett regretfully. "She declines to answer the question."

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

"There's a note done cum fo' yo', suh," announced the elevator boy lounging in the doorway of the Albany, as Douglas stepped inside the entrance of the apartment hotel. "I'll get it." And visions of a tip caused the mulatto to hasten his leisurely footsteps to the small office at the left of the entrance. In a few seconds he was back at the

elevator shaft, where Douglas stood waiting, and handed him a square envelope stamped with the words "State Department" in the left-hand corner. "Wanter go to yo' room, suh?" slipping the expected coin into his trousers pocket.

"Yes." The door slammed shut, and the elevator shot upward. "Any one been to see me or telephoned, Jonas?"

"No, suh." The mulatto brought the cage to a standstill at the third floor, and Douglas stepped out and hastened to his tiny apartment. Throwing his hat and cane on the bed, he drew a chair to the open window, having first made sure, with a caution that had grown upon him, that the hall door was securely locked, and that the chambermaid was not loitering in the vicinity. As he opened the note, an inclosure fell into his lap, but without looking at it he perused the few written lines. It was from the secretary of state. He read:

DEAR MR. HUNTER: So far, no further developments. When people are at play they are usually "off guard." I inclose an invitation to the garden party at the White House this afternoon, for which I asked. The diplomatic corps will attend in a body. I hope to see you there.

Douglas picked up the inclosed envelope with the words "The White House" stamped in small gold letters in the upper left-hand corner, and pulled out the engraved card. The gold-eagle crest at the top of the invitation was almost stared out of countenance, so long and so steadily did he regard it, as he slowly weighed in his mind the events of the past three days.

If the desk file used to kill the senator did belong to Mrs. Owen, then Brett had woven strong circumstantial evidence around Captain Lane. Was it possible that the young officer, incensed at Senator Carew's threat to turn his niece, Cynthia, out of doors, and goaded past endurance by a possible tongue-lashing at their last interview, had seized the opportunity offered by chance and killed Carew, an hereditary enemy? From time immemorial, family feuds had, alas! often led to murder.

If so, what, then, became of his own theory of an international intrigue? Were Senator Carew's interest in things Japanese, his desire to see Douglas, the information gleaned by the latter in Japan, the untimely death of the senator, and, last, the theft of the plans of the new battleships—were these simply coincidences?

Douglas roused himself, and glanced at the hour mentioned in the invitation—five o'clock. Jerking out his watch, he found he had but half an hour in which to change his clothes before he was due at the White House.

Shortly afterward, Douglas walked through Lafayette Square on his way to the eastern entrance of the White House. A long queue of smart turn-outs and motors stretched along Pennsylvania Avenue from Seventeenth Street to Executive Avenue, as the short street between the treasury department and the White House is called.

The policeman on special duty scrutinized his card of admission carefully before allowing him to pass down the corridor and out into the garden.

The president and his wife were receiving on the lawn under a huge, blossoming chestnut tree near the south portico. As Douglas waited in line to approach the president, he glanced about him with great interest. He had been to many brilliant functions in other countries, but he decided in his own mind that he had seldom seen a more beautiful setting for an entertainment than that afforded by the stately mansion and its surrounding gardens. The lovely rolling grounds, with their natural beauty, and the towering white shaft of the Washington Monument in the background, made a picture not easily forgotten.

The full-dress uniforms of the military and naval aids on duty added to the brilliancy of the scene. The marine band, their scarlet coats making a vivid touch of color against the huge fountain, with its myriad sprays of water, were stationed on a raised platform far down the lawn. The southern breeze carried the stirring airs they were play-

ing to Douglas' ears, and sent the hot blood dancing in his veins. Or was it the sight of Eleanor Thornton, looking radiantly beautiful, that set his heart to throbbing in a most unusual manner? Some telepathy seemed to tell her of his presence, for she looked around, caught his eye, and bowed.

He had kept moving as the guests ahead of him advanced, and the next moment he was being presented to the president by the military aid stationed in attendance at his elbow. He had but time to receive a hearty handshake and a cordial word of welcome from the president and the "first lady of the land," for the other guests were waiting impatiently to greet them, and he could not loiter.

"Douglas Hunter, as I'm a sinner!" A hearty slap on the shoulder emphasized the words, and Douglas wheeled around to find Captain Chisholm, of the British Royal Artillery, addressing him. "The idea of your being here and not letting me know, old chap!" he added reproachfully, as they shook hands.

"I didn't know you were in town," declared Douglas. "Thought you were still in Paris."

"I was transferred to the embassy in Washington three months ago. Upon my word, Douglas, I took you for a ghost when I first saw you. I was under the impression that you were stationed at Tokyo."

"So I am; I am here only on leave of absence." The Englishman's eyebrows went up. "I had to attend to some Washington property that has been left me by an uncle. This is my native heath, you know."

"I wasn't aware of it," dryly. "But then, Douglas, you are perpetually springing surprises, like your nation, on us benighted foreigners."

"Anything to drink around here?" inquired Douglas. "I am as thirsty as a herring."

"There is some excellent champagne punch. Come along." And the tall Englishman led the way to a long table placed under the trees near the tennis courts, where refreshments were being served. They corralled a colored waiter,



"Miss Thornton," said a cold voice back of them, "Mrs. Truxton is waiting for you."

and soon were sipping iced punch, as, standing at some distance from the crowd about the table, they watched the animated scene.

"I didn't want to come to Washington," acknowledged Chisholm, after a

moment's silence. "But now I'd hate to leave it. The people are delightful, and I have never met with such genuine hospitality."

"You are right; Washington people never forget you. Go away for ten

years, and on your return you will be greeted just as warmly as to-day."

"Don't talk of going away; I've only just come," laughed Chisholm. "My word, Douglas, this seems like old times! I can almost imagine myself back in Paris. The chestnut trees in blossom, which remind me of the Parc Monceau, help the illusion. And there's another illusion," nodding his head toward Eleanor Thornton, who stood at some distance, talking to two staff officers, "or I should say a *delusion*." He smiled gayly, but there was no answering smile on Douglas' face. Not noticing his companion's silence, the Englishman added: "Is she still hunting around, looking up old files and records?"

Douglas started as if stung. "I don't know," shortly.

"A dangerous habit," commented Chisholm calmly. "If Miss Thornton had not left Paris and gone to Berlin when she did, her interest in government affairs might have led to serious trouble—for her."

"Now, what the devil do you mean?" demanded Douglas hotly.

Chisholm turned and regarded him steadily for a second, then his monocle slipped down and dangled from its silken cord. "There, there!" he exclaimed soothingly. "Don't get your rag up! I was only spoofing."

"You have very rudimentary ideas of humor," growled Douglas, still incensed. In his heart he knew the Englishman was right; Eleanor Thornton was an enigma. Dare he penetrate the mystery, or was he afraid to face the issue?

Chisholm laughed good-naturedly. "Miss Thornton is looking at you, Douglas; don't let me detain you. I'll see you again before I leave here."

Douglas hesitated; then, with the remark, "I'll be back soon, Chisholm," he walked across the lawn to join Eleanor.

The Englishman looked after him with speculative eyes. "Still touched in that quarter," he muttered, twirling his blond mustache in his fingers. "Too bad! Douglas is such a bully good chap—and she——"

He was not allowed to indulge in more reflections, for he was seized upon by a bevy of pretty girls, and forced to dance attendance upon them for the remainder of the afternoon.

Recollections of his last interview with Eleanor troubled Douglas. How would she greet him? His doubts were soon put at rest, for at his approach Eleanor put out her hand and greeted him warmly. The two staff officers, who were introduced to Douglas, saw they were *de trop*, and, after a few minutes, made their excuses and departed.

"Will you have an ice or a sandwich?" inquired Douglas.

"Neither, thanks; I have already been helped."

"Then suppose we stroll down to the fountain. We can't hear the marine band with all this chatter." He glanced disgustedly at the joyous crowd about them.

Eleanor laughed. "Don't be hard on your fellow creatures, if you are out of sorts."

"What makes you think that?"

"You looked so cross when talking to Captain Chisholm. I am sorry you found your topic of conversation so boring."

"What do you mean?"

"You both glanced so frequently at me that I naturally concluded I was under discussion."

"On the contrary, we were discussing—masked batteries." She scanned him covertly, but could get no inkling of his thoughts from his blank expression. "Captain Chisholm has a fatal habit of talking shop whenever he gets a chance. Isn't that Colonel Thornton beckoning to us over there?"

"Why, so it is. Shall we walk over and join him?" She paused to exchange a few words of greeting with several friends, then turned back to Douglas smilingly. "Come." He suited his steps to hers as they started across the lawn. "How long will you remain in Washington, Mr. Hunter?"

"Until the sale of some property of mine is completed," briefly. "I asked for you this morning, Miss Thornton, thinking you might care to go for a

motor ride, but they told me that you were lying down and could not be disturbed."

"They? Who?" swiftly. "This is the first I have heard of your call."

"Indeed? Why, I spoke to Annette when I reached the Carew residence this morning."

"Annette!" in growing astonishment. "Annette told you I was indisposed, and could not be disturbed?"

"Yes. My cousin had loaned me his car for the morning, and I thought it just possible that a run in the fresh air might set you up after the funeral yesterday."

"It was good of you to think of me, Mr. Hunter." She raised her eyes in time to see the secretary of state regarding her intently as they strolled past him. He lifted his hat courteously, and returned their words of greeting, but his face was grave as he paused and watched them moving through the throng. "I am sorry about this morning," continued Eleanor. "Annette and I will have a reckoning when we reach home."

"Would you have gone with me?" eagerly.

"Yes." Douglas bent to catch the monosyllable. Her foot turned on the uneven ground, and he put his hand on her arm to steady her. As his fingers closed over her soft, rounded arm, he instinctively drew her closer. The warmth of her skin through her glove thrilled him.

"I hope you will ask me again," she said.

"To-morrow? Will you go with me to-morrow?"

"Yes." She met his eyes for a second, then glanced away, while a hot blush mantled her cheeks. "Provided, of course, that Cynthia Carew does not need me." Then, in a louder tone: "Well, Uncle Dana, how are you?"

"Feeling splendidly. No need to ask about you and Douglas." He smiled quizzically. "I am glad that you could come here to-day, Eleanor."

"I did not wish to, but Cousin Kate Truxton insisted that I had to bring her here. She declared that she would not

come otherwise, and made such a point of it that I could not refuse, particularly as Mrs. Winthrop and Cynthia would not hear of my remaining with them."

"I have just come from there," responded Colonel Thornton. "Cynthia came into the library while I was talking to Mrs. Winthrop, and I was shocked by her appearance. The child has wasted away."

"Is it not pitiful?" exclaimed Eleanor. "It nearly breaks my heart to see her suffering. She neither eats nor sleeps."

"Can't you give her an opiate?" asked Douglas.

"She declines to take one."

"Can't you administer it surreptitiously?"

"I have a better plan than that," broke in Colonel Thornton. "The child needs a change of ideas. The atmosphere of the house is enough to get on any one's nerves, particularly with that dipsomaniac, Philip, raising Cain at unexpected moments."

"What's your plan, Uncle Dana?"

"That you bring Cynthia over to my house to-morrow to spend Sunday. You come, too, Douglas. Cynthia hasn't met you, and she won't connect you with any of the tragic occurrences of the past week." Then, as he saw the look of doubt on Eleanor's face, he added: "Human nature can stand just so much of nervous strain, and no more. Cynthia must have relaxation and diversion."

"But I don't think Mrs. Winthrop will approve of her going out so soon after the funeral," objected Eleanor doubtfully.

"Bah! That nonsense belongs to the dark ages. What good will Cynthia's staying in that gloomy house do poor Carew? I'll drop in to-morrow morning and see Mrs. Winthrop. Leave the matter to me, Eleanor. There is no earthly reason why she should object. I'll ask Cousin Kate Truxton also."

"Cousin Kate!" echoed Eleanor, her conscience smiting her. "Where has she gone?"

"I left her talking with Senator Jenkins some time ago." The colonel

glanced behind him. "Speaking of angels, here she comes now."

Mrs. Truxton was walking leisurely in their direction. Seeing that they had observed her, she waved her parasol and hastened her footsteps.

"Cousin Kate, I think you already know Mr. Hunter," said Eleanor, as the older woman reached her side.

"Indeed I do." Mrs. Truxton extended both her hands, her face beaming with smiles. "Why haven't you been to see me, Douglas?" she added reproachfully.

"I have been extremely busy since my arrival, Mrs. Truxton," apologized Douglas. "I was looking forward to calling upon you this Sunday."

"Have you had a pleasant time this afternoon, Kate?" asked Thornton.

"Yes. It has been a delightful entertainment; just the right people and the right number."

"It would be pretty hard to crowd these grounds," laughed Eleanor.

"There isn't any elbowroom about the refreshment table," put in Thornton; "I almost had to fight to get a plate of ice cream a few minutes ago."

"A much-needed improvement would be small chairs scattered about the grounds," grumbled Mrs. Truxton, leaning heavily on her parasol. "It is exceedingly tiresome having to stand so long."

"It would be prettier, too, and less formal," agreed Eleanor. "The guests would then saunter over the lawns, and not stand crowded together near the president."

"It would also be much more brilliant if the members of the diplomatic corps wore their court dress," announced Mrs. Truxton, with decision, "instead of those hideous frock coats and gray trousers."

"What, in this weather, Kate?" exclaimed the astonished colonel. "Do you wish to kill off the corps bodily? They wear their court dress only at the state receptions and the diplomatic dinners held at the White House every winter."

"I know that," pettishly. "But it

would improve the brilliancy of this affair."

"Even with the objectionable frock coat," laughed the colonel, "this is a scene characteristic of the national capital alone. Nowhere else in this country can such a gathering of distinguished men and women be brought together."

"You are quite right in that," acknowledged Mrs. Truxton. "I've seen ten presidents come and go, and I have lived to see Washington develop in a way that would have surprised the founders. Mercy on us, look at 'Fuss and Feathers'!" She nodded toward a pretty, overdressed little Western woman, who was advancing in their direction.

"Mrs. Blake has certainly outdone herself," agreed Colonel Thornton, as he and Douglas raised their hats in greeting to the pretty woman who strolled past them. "I wonder she doesn't make you wish to break the Eighth Commandment, Eleanor."

"Why?" exclaimed his niece.

"On account of her collection of magnificent rubies," Eleanor changed color. "I thought that stone was one of your fads."

"I like *all* jewelry." The slight emphasis was lost on her companions. Eleanor fingered her parasol nervously, and glanced uneasily over her shoulder to where Douglas stood beyond earshot, talking to an old friend. "But I shall spend my time in wishing; I can never hope to rival Mrs. Blake's collection."

"Marry a rich man and persuade him to give you rings and necklaces," advised Thornton. Eleanor moved restlessly.

"Mrs. Blake looks like a jeweler's window," broke in Mrs. Truxton, in her uncompromising bass. "Such a display at a garden party is unpardonable. It is extremely bad taste for any woman to wear to the White House more jewelry than adorns the president's wife."

Thornton laughed outright. "Few women will agree with you, Kate. By the way, why didn't you come to the

telephone last night? I wanted to speak to you particularly. It wasn't late when I called."

"I gave Soto, Eleanor's cook, his English lesson last night, and when we got to a present participle used in a future sense to indicate a present intention of a future action, I was so tired I had to go to bed," explained Mrs. Truxton, as Douglas rejoined them.

"After that I am only surprised that you ever got up again," ejaculated the colonel.

"Cousin Kate nearly worries herself sick teaching Soto," laughed Eleanor. "I only wish you had heard her describing the kingdom of heaven to him. She introduced some new features into that kingdom that would probably surprise the Presbyterian synod. I suppose she didn't want to disappoint his great expectations."

"Is Soto a Jap?" asked Douglas curiously.

"Yes. I prefer Japanese servants, and both Soto and Fugi have been with me for some time," said Eleanor. "Do you know, Uncle Dana, I have just discovered that Fugi has studied five years at the American school in Japan, two years at the Spencerian Business College, and is a graduate of Columbia University?"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Truxton. "After this I shan't dare to ask him to pass me the bread. What did you want to say to me on the telephone, Dana?"

"I wanted some facts about the late Governor Lane, of Maryland, and, knowing you were a walking encyclopedia, I thought you might help me out."

"Of course I can. Do you——"

"Hush!" exclaimed Eleanor anxiously. "Here comes Captain Lane."

Douglas scanned the tall young officer approaching them with keen interest. His uniform set off his fine figure to advantage, and his face was one to inspire confidence.

"How are you, Mrs. Truxton?" he said. "Miss Eleanor, I've been searching the place for you. Won't you come and see the rose garden with me? Oh, I

beg pardon, colonel! I didn't see you at first."

"That's all right, Lane. Have you met Mr. Hunter?"

"No. How do you do, sir?" Lane wrung Douglas' hand. "Glad to know you."

"It is time for us all to go," declared Mrs. Truxton. "We must say good-by. Come with me, Douglas. I want to ask you some questions about your uncle's death."

As the small group strolled toward the White House, Colonel Thornton was buttonholed by an old friend. Mrs. Truxton, with Douglas in tow, crossed the ground to where the president was standing talking to several late arrivals.

"Now's our time," whispered Lane in Eleanor's ear. "The rose garden is at our right." He said no more until they had passed the south portico and walked down the path leading to the wonderful box hedges that surround the rose garden. They had the place to themselves, and Eleanor exclaimed with pleasure at the beautiful flowers, which were blossoming in profusion.

"How is Cynthia?" demanded Lane, stopping in the middle of the garden path, and regarding his companion intently.

"Almost a nervous wreck."

"My poor darling!" The soldier's strong face betrayed deep feeling. "I wish I could comfort her." His voice changed. "Miss Eleanor, why does she refuse to see me?" Eleanor hesitated perceptibly. "Wait! Let me finish. I have called repeatedly at the Carews', only to be told that Cynthia is confined to her room; I have written notes that I have given personally to Joshua to deliver, and have never received an answer to one of them."

"I love Cynthia with all my heart and soul"—Lane's voice shook with feeling—"and I would have sworn, before her uncle's death, that my affection was returned. I cannot understand her avoidance of me, and her silence cuts deep." He paused a moment, and cleared his throat. "Miss Eleanor, you are Cynthia's most intimate friend, and you are with her constantly. You must have



Fearlessly she raised her lips to his—in surrender.

heard of some reason for her treatment of me."

Eleanor nodded without speaking. She heartily wished the interview was over.

"Then I implore you to tell me the reason of Cynthia's silence."

"Can't you imagine that for yourself?" began Eleanor; then, as Lane shook his head, she added: "Cynthia is overwrought. Every action on Monday night seems distorted—" She hesitated again and bit her lip. "You went to look for her carriage; you were gone a long time; and when she entered the carriage, her uncle was sitting there—dead."

Slowly her meaning dawned on Lane.

"Good God! You don't mean—"

He staggered back, his face gone white.

"Yes."

"And she thinks *that*! Cynthia, Cynthia, have you so little faith?" Lane's agony was pitiful.

"You must not be unjust to her," cried Eleanor, her loyalty up in arms. "Remember, you had just told her of your fearful quarrel with her uncle; she had also seen you playing with a letter file when you were with her in the library—"

"But, great heavens! I didn't take that out into the street with me," exclaimed Lane passionately. "I tell you

what it is, Miss Eleanor. I must see Cynthia and explain this terrible tangle. Can you help me meet her?"

Eleanor considered for a moment. "I have already urged Cynthia to see you, but she has been so unnerved, so unstrung, that I could not make her see matters in a reasonable light. I think the best thing for you to do is to meet her when she least expects it."

"Capital! Can you arrange such a meeting?"

"My uncle, Colonel Thornton, has asked Cynthia and me to go to his house in Georgetown to-morrow and spend Sunday. I think Mrs. Winthrop will permit Cynthia to go, and if that is the case, you can call there to-morrow night."

"Good!" Lane paced the walk restlessly for a minute, then returned to Eleanor's side. "It's pretty hard to wait so long before seeing her," he said wistfully.

Eleanor held out her hand. "Don't be discouraged; Cynthia loves you devotedly."

"God bless you for those words!" Lane caught her hand and raised her slender fingers to his lips.

"Miss Thornton," said a cold voice back of them, "Mrs. Truxton is waiting for you." And Eleanor flushed scarlet as she met Douglas' eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOTH AND THE FLAME.

Douglas brought the powerful roadster to a standstill under the portecochère of the Carew mansion, and disentangling himself from among the levers, ran up the few steps. Before he could ring the bell, the door was opened by Colonel Thornton.

"Come in," he exclaimed heartily. "I saw you from the drawing-room window, and, as Joshua has gone to ask Mrs. Winthrop if she can see me, I thought I would let you in, and not keep you standing outside."

"Thanks, colonel." Douglas followed the older man into the drawing-room. "Have you seen Miss Eleanor?"

"No. Here, don't sit on that gilt-edged insecurity," as Douglas pulled forward a parlor chair. "This sofa is big enough to hold us both. Tell me, are there any new developments in the Carew case?"

"Only that Brett is convinced Captain Lane is guilty, and from what he said this morning, I should not be at all surprised to hear of the latter's arrest."

"Good Lord! You don't say so! Poor, poor Cynthia! I greatly fear another shock will prove most dangerous in her present nervous condition."

"Has Mrs. Winthrop consented to Miss Carew's spending to-morrow at your house?"

"I don't know yet—" Colonel Thornton stopped abruptly as the portières parted, and a woman stepped into the room. Thinking it was Mrs. Winthrop, he started to rise, but it proved to be Annette, and he sank back in his seat.

"*Bon jour, messieurs.*" Annette readjusted the portières with care, then walked with catlike quickness over to where the men were sitting. "Mistaire Hunter, you are investigating ze death of Senator Carew, *n'est-ce pas?* And you, monsieur," turning to Colonel Thornton, "are Madame Winthrop's man of affairs?"

"Well, what then?" asked Douglas quickly.

"Only that I may be of help."

"Indeed?"

"*Oui, messieurs,*" calmly. "I know—much."

"Good!" Thornton's tone betrayed his satisfaction. "Go ahead and tell us."

"*Ah, non, non, monsieur!*" Annette shook her head violently. "First, I must have some monie."

"What, a bribe?" Douglas spoke with rising indignation.

"*Non, monsieur;* a reward."

"You must first tell us what you know," explained Thornton patiently. "Then, if your information leads to the arrest and conviction of the murderer, you will be paid the one thousand dollars offered by Mrs. Winthrop."

"One thousand dollars did you say,

monsieur? *Non*, I will not sell my news for that."

"It is the amount offered by Mrs. Winthrop."

"But Madame Winthrop is willing to give five thousand." Annette glanced eagerly at the two men. "My news is worth that."

Thornton shook his head. "Mrs. Winthrop has reconsidered, and will not give more than one thousand," he declared, with finality.

An obstinate frown marred Annette's pretty face. "I will not take less than five thousand," she announced, with emphasis.

"You go too fast," broke in Douglas quietly. "First, the reward will not be paid until after the murderer is convicted; secondly, your information may be of no value whatever."

"So?" Annette's smile was not pleasant. "Zen I keep my news to myself," and she started for the door.

"Wait!" commanded Thornton. "Come back here!" Then, as she obeyed, he added in a more kindly tone: "If your information is really valuable, Annette, I am willing to advance you some money. But first you must tell us what you know and suspect."

"How much?"

"Say fifty dollars," drawing out his leather wallet, and extracting several yellowbacks, which he held temptingly in his hand.

"Not enough, monsieur."

Thornton lost all patience. "I shan't offer you another cent," and he thrust the money back into the wallet.

Annette's eyes flashed. "Very well, monsieur le colonel; I go. But when I come back, you will have to pay me more—but, yes!—more than that beggarly five thousand!" And, with a stamp of her foot, she turned and hastened out of the room.

"A nice she-devil!" remarked Thornton, gazing blankly at Douglas.

"I think——" Douglas broke off, as the portières were again thrust aside, and Eleanor walked in.

"Uncle Dana, Mrs. Winthrop is waiting to see you in the library. Oh, Mr. Hunter, good morning." Her slender

hand was almost lost in his firm clasp. "I did not know you were here."

"I called, hoping that you might care to take a motor ride," said Douglas quickly.

"Why, yes; with pleasure."

"Eleanor," broke in Thornton, returning from the hall door, "did you tell that precious maid of yours that Mrs. Winthrop would give five thousand dollars reward for information leading to the conviction of the murderer of Senator Carew?"

"Annette!" in profound astonishment. "No, certainly not; I've never spoken to her on the subject. Where did you get such an idea?" Her voice rose to a higher key.

"She has just been here, insisting that we pay her five thousand for some information which, she declares, will solve the puzzle of poor Carew's death."

Eleanor smiled incredulously. "Nonsense! I don't believe she knows a thing about it." Her bright color had faded, and she gazed anywhere but at the two men.

"It may be," suggested Douglas thoughtfully, "that, while in this house, she has found a certain paper for which Brett is searching."

"That's possible," agreed Thornton. "It was announced in yesterday's papers that a reward of one thousand dollars had been offered. But what gets me is how Annette knew that Mrs. Winthrop might raise the amount to five thousand—the very sum, in fact, that she first thought of offering."

"I'm sure I don't know." Eleanor frowned in perplexity.

"Is she a good servant?" inquired Douglas.

"I have always found her honest and reliable. She brought me excellent recommendations when she came to me in Paris, where I engaged her."

"It may be that the mystery has gone to her head," suggested Thornton, "and she is inspired to play detective."

"Personally, I think she is taking advantage of the present situation to extort money," objected Douglas.

"I believe you've hit it," exclaimed the older man. "Tell Brett, Douglas.

He may be able to induce Annette to tell what she knows. I must go now and see Mrs. Winthrop."

"Let me know what she decides about Sunday," called Eleanor, as Thornton, for the second time, hurried out of the room.

"You are looking tired, Miss Thornton," said Douglas, glancing at her attentively.

"I didn't get much sleep last night. Cynthia was miserable, and I sat up with her until five o'clock this morning."

"No wonder you are worn out!" Douglas looked his concern. "I really think a motor ride would do you lots of good. Do keep your promise and come for a spin."

Eleanor glanced doubtfully down at her pretty house gown. "If you don't mind waiting while I change—"

"Why, certainly not."

"I won't be long," and Eleanor disappeared.

Douglas did not resume his seat, but, instead, paced the room with long, nervous strides. Eleanor was not the only one who had passed a sleepless night. He had sat up and wracked his brain, trying to find the key to the solution of the mystery surrounding the senator's death. Annette must be made to tell what she knew. Perhaps Brett's authority as an officer of the law might intimidate her. It was worth trying. Walking down to the folding doors that led from the drawing-room into the dining room, he opened them and found Joshua busy polishing the mahogany table.

"Is there a branch telephone in the house?" he asked. "Besides the one in the library? Mrs. Winthrop is in there, and I don't want to disturb her."

"Suttenly, suh; dar's one right in de pantry, suh." And Joshua, dropping his work, piloted Douglas to the instrument.

It took him but a few minutes to get police headquarters on the wire, only to find that Brett was out. Whistling softly, he hung up the receiver and went back into the drawing-room. Eleanor had not appeared, and he sat down at the inlaid desk, which was supplied

with pen, ink, and paper, and wrote a short note while he waited for her return.

"Where's Eleanor?" asked Thornton, coming into the room and picking up his hat, which he had left on one of the chairs.

"Here." And his niece, who had entered just behind him, joined them. "I am sorry to have kept you so long, Mr. Hunter, but I found Annette had gone out on an errand for Cynthia, and I had to do without her assistance."

"You were very successful." Thornton made her a courtly bow, as he gazed at his beautiful niece. Her fashionable, light-gray suit and smart hat were extremely becoming. Eleanor colored faintly as she read the admiration in Douglas' eyes.

"What luck did you have with Mrs. Winthrop, Uncle Dana?" she asked.

"The best. She said she thought it an excellent plan. So I shall expect you both this afternoon, Eleanor, and you had better stop and pick up Cousin Kate Truxton on your way out."

"Very well, I will; but, Uncle Dana, we won't get over to you until just before dinner."

"That will do." The two men followed Eleanor out into the square hall. "Don't forget, Douglas, that I expect you, too."

"That's very good of you, sir." Douglas hesitated, "but don't you think I might be in the way in a family party?"

"A family party is exactly what I wish to avoid," exclaimed Thornton. "Cynthia needs to be taken out of herself. And, therefore, I want you to spend Sunday with us as if it were a regular house party."

"Then I'll come with pleasure." Douglas helped Eleanor into the low seat of the motor, and clambered in behind the wheel. "I'm awfully sorry there isn't a third seat, colonel, and that I can't take you where you wish to go."

"I left my car down by the curb. Thanks all the same, Douglas." And Thornton waved a friendly good-by to Eleanor as the motor started slowly down the driveway.

"If you have no objection, I will stop at the Municipal Building for a moment, Miss Thornton," said Douglas, turning the car into Thirteenth Street.

"I don't mind in the least. What a magnificent motor!"

"Isn't it?" with enthusiasm, as he steered safely between another machine and a delivery wagon. "My chief in Tokyo has one just like this, and I learned to run his car."

As they crossed K Street, he put on the emergency brakes hard, and the motor stopped just in time, as a touring car shot in front of them, and disappeared down the street. When the car was again under way, Douglas turned to the silent girl by his side.

"That was the Japanese ambassador, was it not?"

"Yes."

"He seemed to be in the devil of a hurry. It was a near smash."

"A little too near for comfort." Eleanor drew a long breath. "I noticed some luggage in his car— Oh, take care!" as the motor skidded toward the gutter.

"I beg your pardon! I didn't mean to frighten you," said Douglas, as he applied the brake going down Thirteenth Street hill to Pennsylvania Avenue. "That chap got on my nerves. I don't care if he is an ambassador, and exempt from arrest; he has no business to be breaking our rules and regulations."

"Come now! Didn't you break some rules when in Japan?" asked Eleanor, her lovely face dimpling into a smile. Douglas started slightly, but she apparently did not notice his discomfiture. "Judging from the luggage in the car, and the rate at which they were going, I imagine the ambassador was trying to catch a train."

"It looks that way." Douglas brought the car to a standstill before one of the entrances to the Municipal Building. "I won't be a minute, Miss Thornton."

"Don't hurry on my account," Eleanor called after him.

Brett was still out, so Douglas gave the note he had written when waiting for Eleanor at the Carews' to the at-

tendant, first adding a postscript, and inclosing it in a large envelope, with instructions that it was to be delivered to the detective immediately on his return. Then, with a lighter heart, he hastened out of the building and rejoined Eleanor.

"Where do you wish to go, Miss Thornton?" he asked, as they started slowly up Pennsylvania Avenue.

Eleanor considered a moment before answering. "Suppose we go out the Conduit Road," she said finally.

Douglas swung the machine across the broad avenue and through the short street behind the treasury department, into the drive that circles around the White House grounds. "It's some years since I've been out in this direction, Miss Thornton, so if I go astray, please put me back on the straight and narrow path."

"Straight out Pennsylvania Avenue and through Georgetown," directed Eleanor, as the big car swung back again into the avenue. "The narrow path comes after you reach the Conduit."

"Then it should be spelled 'Conduct.' You have been going out a great deal this winter, have you not?"

"Yes; Washington has been extremely gay, and I have enjoyed it so much."

Douglas smiled down at her. "And I bet a thousand to one that Washington enjoyed you. I asked about your going out because I am wondering if, among all the men you've met this winter, you have come across a middle-aged man with black hair and beard, and very blue eyes?"

Not receiving a reply, Douglas turned and scanned his companion. She sat silent, gazing straight before her. The car sped on for several squares before she roused herself.

"That is a very vague description, Mr. Hunter. Do you remember the man's name?"

Douglas shook his head. "I have never heard it. I asked only because I was under the impression that I saw him with you at the navy department on Thursday morning."

"With me—at the navy department?"

gasped Eleanor, sitting bolt upright. She was white to the lips.

"Yes; I thought I saw him talking to you in an elevator. I just caught a glimpse of you as the cage descended past the floor on which I was."

"You are entirely mistaken, Mr. Hunter," Eleanor's eyes did not waver before his questioning look. "I was alone, though I do recollect there was another passenger in the elevator, who got out on the first floor, while I continued on down to the basement."

"Then I was mistaken," Douglas slowed the car down to the limit prescribed by law as he crossed the M Street bridge over Rock Creek, then increased his speed as they passed through Georgetown.

"You have aroused my curiosity." Eleanor settled herself more comfortably in the low seat. "Why do you take an interest in a man with blue eyes and black hair?"

"Because I thought he was with you."

"Upon my word!" Eleanor's laugh held a shade of annoyance. "That's a very silly reason!"

"I don't think it is," replied Douglas steadily. "I am interested in everything that concerns you."

Eleanor surveyed him keenly. She studied the fine profile, the broad shoulders, and the powerful hands holding the steering wheel. The quiet figure seemed instinct with the vital personality of the man, a living part of the pulsing machine that he was guiding through the narrow, congested street with such skill. They crossed Thirty-seventh Street, and in a few minutes the car leaped ahead up the hill leading to the Conduit.

Eleanor said nothing, and Douglas was equally silent. They had the narrow road to themselves, and he increased their speed. The wheels raced like velvet on the finished macadam. On they sped. Soon Eleanor caught a glimpse of the Potomac below them, and the bright sunlight sparkled on the water, and on the green foliage of the wooded banks of the Maryland and Virginia shores. They passed the Three Sisters, then the reservoirs, and Doug-

las saw a straight stretch of road ahead, and no vehicle in sight. The next moment the powerful machine, gathering speed, fairly shot down the road, which seemed a narrowing white strip as the revolving wheels devoured the distance.

Douglas turned his eyes a moment from the flying landscape to Eleanor, who sat, tense, fearless, her pulses leaping as the rushing wind stung her cheeks. She caught his look. "Faster, faster!" she called. And obediently Douglas threw the throttle wide open. On, on they flew. A wild exhilaration engulfed Eleanor; her spirit seemed to soar, detached from things earthly. She cast a glance of resentment at Douglas, when, seeing that the road curved in the distance, he slackened speed. By the time the big car reached the turning, he had brought it to a standstill near the side of the road.

Eleanor drew a long breath. "Oh, why did you stop?" Her eyes shone like stars. "It was glorious!"

"I stopped"—Douglas turned squarely in his seat and faced Eleanor—"because I want to ask you to confide in me."

"To do *what*?" Eleanor's deep-blue eyes opened to their widest extent.

"To tell me"—Douglas hesitated over his choice of words—"your mission in life."

Eye to eye, they gazed at each other. Eleanor was the first to speak.

"I am at a loss to understand your singular request," she said freeingzingly.

"Miss Thornton, do me the justice to think that I am not asking from idle curiosity; it is because I have your welfare so deeply at heart."

"If I did not know you to be a sane person, I should think you had suddenly lost your mind. As you take the matter so seriously, I must repeat that I am concerned in nothing."

Douglas held her gaze, as if in the limpid depths of her blue eyes he would fathom the secret of her soul. Eleanor's breath came and went, she colored painfully, but her eyes never dropped before his. Nearer he bent and nearer. The

virile strength of the man drew her, and his arms closed about her slender waist.

"Eleanor, I love you." The very repression of his tone added to its intensity.

Fearlessly she raised her lips to his—in surrender.

Some time later, Douglas backed the car a yard or two, then turned it toward Washington, but their return trip was made with due attention to the speed law.

"Will you please tell me—Douglas——" She hesitated adorably over his name. "Indeed, you must not kiss me again!" drawing back as far as the seat would permit. "Why did you avoid me in Paris?"

A shadow passed over Douglas' radiant face, and was gone before Eleanor observed it.

"I suppose you would call it false pride," he said. "I had no money—you had much—and so I worshiped from a distance. Now that my inheritance has made me well to do, I felt that I had a right to ask you to marry me. In Paris I thought you would take me for a fortune hunter."

"Which only goes to show what fools men are!" exclaimed Eleanor roguishly. "Bend down nearer me." She placed her mouth close to his ear. "You could have had me for the asking then, dear heart"—his left arm stole about her—"for I know a man when I see one."

"Not a word, remember!"

"Madame has my promise." Annette tucked the small roll of bills inside the bosom of her gown as Mrs. Winthrop replaced her pocketbook in her handsome leather hand bag.

"Where is Miss Eleanor?"

"Joshua tells me that in my absence mademoiselle left ze house to motor wiz Monsieur Hunter."

"If she asks for me on her return, tell her that I will be back in time to lunch with her and Miss Cynthia."

"*Oui, madame.*" Annette assisted Mrs. Winthrop into her coat, then left the bedroom. From a safe distance down the hall, she watched Mrs. Win-

throp descend the staircase, and waited until she heard Joshua close the front door after her and retreat into his own domain. She then slipped noiselessly down the hall and into Mrs. Winthrop's bedroom. Half an hour passed before she again appeared, wearing a satisfied smile. The hall was empty. "I have seen what I have seen," she muttered under her breath exultingly, as she proceeded downstairs. "And I think I will haf more monie by to-morrow. *Mon Dieu!*"

The peal of the front bell had startled her from her reverie. As Joshua did not appear to answer it, she crossed the square hall and opened the door. A tall man, wearing nondescript clothes, confronted her in the vestibule.

"Miss Thornton—is she in?" he questioned. The contrast of his deep-blue eyes against his tanned skin and black beard held her attention. Receiving no reply, he repeated his question with emphasis.

"*Non, mademoiselle is out in ze motor,*" she answered, none too civilly.

Without a word, he turned on his heel and hastened down the steps. Annette stared up the street after him; then closed the door softly, her pretty forehead puckered in a frown. Where had she seen those eyes before?

CHAPTER XIV.

"THORNTON'S NEST."

Douglas, suit case in hand, ran across Seventeenth Street in time to catch a Georgetown car. As he paid the conductor, he heard his name called, and, glancing down the half-empty car, saw Captain Chisholm seated at the farther end, and beckoning to him. He made his way down the center aisle, and joined the Englishman.

"Can you dine with me, Douglas?" asked Chisholm, making room for him on the narrow seat.

"Ask me some other time, old man. I am dining with Colonel Thornton to-night."

"Then suppose we make it Monday night at the Metropolitan Club?"

"Thanks, I will. At what hour?"

"Eight o'clock. I was sorry to miss you when you called this afternoon, Douglas."

"How did you know I had been to see you, Chisholm?" in surprise. "The telephone girl told me you were out."

"I stopped for a moment at the Rochambeau, and found your card in my letter box. I am on my way to the embassy now. Washington seems to agree with you, Douglas," eying his companion with interest. "I never saw you looking better."

"Happiness is a great health restorer," laughed Douglas.

"Happiness?" Chisholm tugged at his fair mustache. "Hum!" He looked carefully around; they had that end of the car to themselves. "Heard the news?"

"What news?"

"About the Japanese ambassador?"

"No."

"He has been recalled."

"For what reason?"

"Not given out," shortly. "He called at the White House and state department, presented his papers, and left this morning." Chisholm looked Douglas squarely in the face. "Can't give a poor blasted Englishman a point on the situation, I suppose?"

Douglas smiled, but his eyes were grave. "I would if I could—but I can't. The ambassador's departure is as great a surprise to me as to you."



"You!" Cynthia shrank back against the wall as Lane stepped forward.

Chisholm leaned forward and touched the electric button as the car approached N Street. "I'll look you up to-morrow, Douglas. Ta-ta, old chap." And he hurried out of the car.

Douglas settled back in his seat and pondered over the information Chisholm had given him. What did the ambassador's abrupt departure portend? Was it but another of those puzzling coincidences that seemed to follow in the wake of Senator Carew's murder, or was it the culmination of an intrigue that would end in war?

The spring day was drawing to a close as Douglas left the car in Georgetown and walked toward "Thornton's Nest." The old place had not altered since he had seen it last, twelve-years before. Even the beautiful old garden appeared as usual; the same box hedge, the envy of the neighboring landowners, separated the sidewalk from the well-kept private grounds. The large, old-fashioned mansion stood back some distance in its own grounds. The bricks had been brought from Philadelphia by sloop, and the fanlight over the front door had been imported from England in the days prior to the Revolutionary War. The huge columns supporting the arched roof shone white in the gathering darkness. Douglas turned in at the gate, ran lightly up the few stone steps leading to the portico, and rang the bell. He had hardly removed his hand from the button when the hall door was opened and an old darky confronted him on the threshold.

"Cum right in, Marse Douglas. I'se mighty glad ter see yo' ag'in, suh."

"Nicodemus, is that you?" shaking the old man's hand. "I haven't seen you since you chased me off the grounds for stealing apples. How's Sophy?"

"Only to'able, thank ye, suh; she's got a misery in her back. Want ter go to yo' room, suh?"

"No, I'll just leave my hat and overcoat here."

"Yessir. Let me take yo' bag, suh; I'll tote it upstairs. My," as Douglas stepped forward so that the hall light fell full on him, "how yo' do favor yo' pa, the ole cunnel!"

Douglas laughed. "Thanks. Have the ladies come yet?"

"Yessir. Dey's upstairs makin' demselves comfo'able. Cunnel Thornton will be down direkly. Yo' jes' walk inter de pawlar."

Douglas strolled over to the large hall mirror, and inspected his tie with care; he had been in a hurry when getting into his evening clothes at the Albany, and the tie had proved troublesome. He readjusted it with care, felt in his vest pocket for a small box, then turned and surveyed his surroundings. A coach

and four might have driven through the broad hall that ran the length of the house. At the end of the hall, two broad, circular staircases led to a wide landing, from which branched the two flights of steps leading to the first bedroom floor. Doors leading to the drawing-room, library, billiard, and dining rooms opened on the right and left of the hall.

Remembering that the drawing-room was at the left of the entrance, Douglas entered the open door and walked over to the mantelpiece, to see the time by the tall marble clock.

"Aren't you going to speak to me?" asked a mischievous voice behind him, and Douglas sprang around with an exclamation of delight. Eleanor was seated on a chair by one of the windows, and its high back, which was partly turned to the hall door, had concealed her from view.

"My darling!" Douglas kissed the winsome face rapturously. "Nicodemus told me you had arrived, but that you were upstairs; otherwise I should have come in at once. I begrudge the time I wasted in the hall."

"I hurried and came down ahead of the others, hoping that you would get here early. I particularly wanted to see you, Douglas."

"Did you?" in mock surprise. "I've been wanting to see you ever since I left you this morning."

She slipped her hand in his. "It's just this, Douglas." Her softly modulated voice had a trace of nervousness. "I want to ask you to keep our engagement a secret"—his face fell—"just a few days," hastily. "I want to get accustomed to it before telling the family." She blushed divinely. "It's such a precious secret."

Douglas took her face between his hands and pressed a passionate kiss on her lips. "Your wish is my law," he said gravely. "I was disappointed for the moment, because I am anxious to have the whole world know my happiness. I brought you this," pulling a small, square box from his vest pocket, and laying it in her outstretched hand.

With a low cry of pleasure, she pulled

off the wrapping paper and opened the box. The light from the lamp on the table near her chair was reflected back from a superb ruby in a diamond setting. The box slipped from her nervous fingers and rolled on the floor.

"Oh, get it quick, Douglas! I didn't mean to be so clumsy."

Douglas reached under the table, where the box had rolled, and picked it up. "It's all right, my dearest; don't look so worried. The ring isn't injured, for it is still in the box. See?" He held it before her eyes. "Give me your left hand, dear." Eleanor shrank slightly away from him, but Douglas was intent on removing the ring from the box, and did not notice her agitation. "It is very becoming to your hand," slipping it on the third finger. "The deep crimson shows off the whiteness of your skin."

"It's just lovely!" Eleanor drew a long breath, then raised her head, and kissed him tenderly. "Thanks, dear heart, for so beautiful a present. But I am afraid, if I wear it to-night, our engagement will be a secret no longer."

"That's true!" exclaimed Douglas, his voice betraying his disappointment. "Put it back in the box," holding it out to her.

"I'll do no such thing," indignantly. "Take it off, Douglas, and give it to me." He did so, and she slipped the ring inside the bodice of her low-cut evening gown. "Tell me, dearest, how did you happen to select a ruby?"

"It's my birth stone," Douglas colored. "I hope you won't think me horribly sentimental."

"I shall not tell you what I think; it might turn your head. Hush! Here comes Uncle Dana."

Thornton strode into the room with outstretched hand. "Welcome to the 'Nest,' Douglas; I am sorry I wasn't downstairs when you came. I hope Eleanor has been doing the honors acceptably."

"She has, indeed, and proved a host in herself," laughed Douglas.

"Good! Though it's a mystery how she got down ahead of the others."

"I was selfish enough to keep Annette

to myself until I was fully dressed," said Eleanor. "Then I sent her to Cousin Kate."

"So you brought Annette with you?" asked Thornton.

"Yes, indeed. I had no intention of inflicting your bachelor household with three women and no handmaiden. I knew Sophy would have her hands full cooking dinner; therefore, I brought Annette along. Her restless eyes detected a figure hovering just outside the hall door. 'Come in, Cynthia.' And she went forward to meet her friend."

The two beautiful girls made a picture good to look upon as they stood together. Cynthia wore a simple frock that matched her cheeks in whiteness. While the pathetic droop of her mouth, and the dark shadows under her eyes, did not detract from her charm, she looked wretchedly ill. She shook hands with Douglas, when he was presented to her, with polite indifference, then seated herself in a chair and leaned back wearily. Douglas and Thornton exchanged glances, and the latter shook his head sadly. He was about to speak when Mrs. Truxton bustled into the room.

"I am sorry to keep everybody waiting," she exclaimed, as Douglas pulled forward a chair for her. "But if you will have dinner at such a ridiculously early hour, Dana, you must expect your guests to be late."

"You are not late, Kate, for dinner has not yet been announced. I had it earlier than usual, as I thought we would retire soon afterward and get a good night's rest."

Cynthia shuddered involuntarily, and Eleanor, whose hand rested on her shoulder, patted it affectionately.

"It's all very well for you older people to keep early hours, Uncle Dana, but Cynthia and I are going to do just as we please. Personally, I expect to stay up until the wee sma' hours."

"Dinner am served," announced Nicodemus, opening the folding doors leading to the dining room, and, with an old-fashioned, courtly bow, Colonel Thornton offered his arm to Mrs. Truxton, and escorted her to the table, the

two girls and Douglas following in their wake.

The dinner passed quickly. Thornton was an agreeable talker, and Douglas, who had traveled in many lands, seconded his efforts by recounting many amusing experiences that had befallen him. Cynthia's pale cheeks assumed a more natural hue as the two skillful talkers drew her out of herself, and Thornton sat back, well pleased, when he finally succeeded in making her laugh.

"Washington isn't what it used to be," he declared. "As trite a statement as it is true. Its very bigness has spoiled it socially. There are cliques within cliques, and too many foreign elements dominate it nowadays."

"Do you refer to the diplomatic corps?" asked Douglas, breaking off a low-toned conversation with Eleanor.

"Not entirely. When I speak of the 'foreign elements,' I also mean the 'climbers.'"

"We Georgetown people call them the 'pushers,'" announced Mrs. Truxton, helping herself to the ice cream that Nicodemus was passing.

"And yet," continued Thornton, "I dare say there were just as amusing characters in Washington fifty years ago as now."

"How about the woman of whom I have heard," asked Eleanor, "who carried off the silver meat skewer at the French legation, as it was then, as a souvenir, and afterward used it as a hat-pin?"

"Human nature is very much the same from one generation to another," acknowledged Mrs. Truxton. "But the types are different. I recollect my grandmother's telling me that she attended services one Sunday at St. John's Episcopal Church, on Lafayette Square, when the rector preached a fiery sermon against the sin of dueling. Mrs. Alexander Hamilton and her daughter sat in the pew just in front of my grandmother, and she said Miss Hamilton bore the tirade for some minutes, then rose, turned to her mother, and remarked in an audible tone:

'Come, ma, we'll go. This is no place for us.'"

"Come, you needn't put it all on Washington," exclaimed Douglas. "Georgetown has famous blunderers and eccentric characters as well."

"And ghosts," added Mrs. Truxton. "Do not deprive Georgetown of its chief attraction. Ghosts and past glory walk hand in hand through these old streets."

"Ghosts?" echoed Douglas, turning to his host. "Unless my memory is playing me false, this house used to be thought haunted. It seems to me I've heard tales of secret passages and mysterious noises."

Thornton laughed outright. "That old legend was caused by flying squirrels getting in the wall through cracks in the eaves and chimneys. Sometimes on still nights I can hear them dropping nuts, which make a great noise as they fall from floor to floor. It's enough to scare a nervous person into fits."

"You are very disappointing, Uncle Dana," objected Eleanor. "When Douglas—Mr. Hunter"—she caught herself up, but apparently no one noticed the slip, and she went on hurriedly—"spoke of spooks, I had hopes of an ancestral ghost."

"I always understood that this house was haunted, Dana," put in Mrs. Truxton.

"Well, I believe we are supposed to possess a ghost—a very respectable, retiring one," added Thornton, as Cynthia's eyes, which were fixed upon him, grew to twice their usual size. "My great-aunt, Sophronia Thornton, was a maiden lady, a good deal of a Tartar, I imagine, from the dance she led my Great-grandfather Thornton, who was an easy-going, peaceable man. She ran the house for him until his marriage, and then ran his wife, and, according to tradition, she has run her descendants out of her room ever since."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Cynthia. "Do tell us all about her."

"There is not so very much to tell." Thornton smiled at her eagerness. "The story goes, as I heard it first from my grandfather, that when he attempted to

occupy her room, the southwest chamber, he was driven out."

"How?"

"He was very fond of reading in bed. As I said before, my great-aunt was very rigid, and did not approve of late hours, which was one rock she and her brother split on. My grandfather, not having the lighting facilities of the present day, used to read in bed by placing a lighted candlestick on his chest, holding his book behind the candle, so that its light fell full on the printed page. At eleven o'clock every night he would feel a slight puff of air, and the candle would go out. He tried everything to stop it. He stuffed every crack and cranny through which a draft might be supposed to come, but it was of no use; his light was always extinguished at eleven o'clock."

"Do you believe it?" asked Cynthia.

Thornton shrugged his shoulders. "I can only give you my own experience. I occupied the room once, when home on a college vacation. The house was filled with visitors, and I was put in the southwest chamber. Everything went on very smoothly until one night I decided to cram for an examination, and took my books to my room. I had an ordinary oil lamp on the table by my bed, and so commenced reading. After I had been reading about an hour, the lamp went out suddenly. I struck a match and relit it; again it was extinguished. We kept that up most of the night; then I gathered my belongings and spent the rest of the time before breakfast on the sofa in the library, where I was not disturbed by the whims of the ghost of my spinster great-aunt."

"There are more things in heaven and earth," quoted Eleanor, as she rose in obedience to a signal from Mrs. Truxton. "Where shall we go, Uncle Dana?" as they strolled out into the hall.

"Into the library. Nicodemus will serve coffee there, and if you ladies have no objection, Douglas and I will smoke there also."

"Why, certainly," exclaimed Mrs. Truxton, picking out a comfortable chair. She signaled Douglas to take the

one next hers, and, without more ado, plunged into questions relating to his family history. He cast longing glances at Eleanor, but she refused to take the hint conveyed, and, to his secret annoyance, left the room shortly after.

Cynthia was having an animated conversation with Colonel Thornton and sipping her coffee, when, happening to look in the direction of the hall door, she saw Eleanor standing there, beckoning to her. Making a hurried excuse to the colonel, she joined Eleanor, who, without a word, slipped her arm about her waist and led her into the drawing-room.

"What is——"

The words died in her throat as she caught sight of a tall, soldierly figure standing under the chandelier. Eleanor discreetly vanished, closing the hall door softly behind her as she went.

"You!" Cynthia shrank back against the wall as Lane stepped forward.

"Cynthia, darling!" He held out his arms pleadingly, but with a moan she turned her face from him. His eyes flashed with indignation. "Cynthia, you have no right to condemn me unheard. I am innocent." He approached her, and gently took her hand in his.

Her eyes were closed, but a few tears forced themselves under the lids, the scalding tears that come when the fountain is dry, and only bitter grief forces such expression of sorrow.

"Dear one, look at me. I am not guilty. I have forced myself upon you, because I want you to understand"—he spoke slowly as if reasoning with a child—"that I am absolutely innocent."

"Not in thought!" burst in Cynthia.

"Perhaps not," steadily, "but in deed. I spoke in anger. Your uncle had insulted me grossly when I met him just before going to Mrs. Owen's dance, and in my indignation I uttered a wish that would have been better left unsaid. But listen to reason, dear; to think evil is not a crime."

Cynthia threw back her head and gazed at him wildly. "Oh, I would so gladly, gladly believe you innocent!" She placed her small, trembling hands

on his breast. "It hurts horribly—because I love you so!"

Lane caught her in a close embrace. "My darling—my dear, dear one——" His voice choked.

Cynthia lay passive in his arms. Suddenly she raised her white face and kissed him passionately; then thrust him from her. "Oh, God! Why did you take that sharp letter file with you?"

"I didn't!" The words were positive, but his looks belied them.

"She says you did—she declares that when she met you looking for the carriage, you held it in your hand——" The words seemed forced from Cynthia. She placed a hand on the chair nearest her, swaying slightly.

"She? Who?" cried Lane.

"Annette."

CHAPTER XV.

A CRY IN THE NIGHT.

Eleanor tiptoed over to the bed. At last Cynthia had dropped asleep. It seemed hours since Lane's call for help had taken her into the drawing-room, where she had found Cynthia stretched upon the floor, and the young officer bending frantically over her. Doctor Marsh, who fortunately resided next door but one, had been sent for, and on his arrival in hot haste, Cynthia had been revived and carried to her room. Cynthia had shown a sudden aversion to having Annette about, so Eleanor had sent the maid to bed, and since ten o'clock had been sitting with Cynthia, trying to quiet her.

Eleanor glanced about the room. There was nothing more she could do, and, stretching herself wearily, she arranged the night light so that it would not shine in Cynthia's eyes, and placed an old-fashioned brass bell on the small table by the bed, so that, if Cynthia needed assistance, she could ring for aid. Then, moving softly for fear of waking the sleeper, she stole across the room, turned out the gas, and, stepping into the hall, closed the door gently after her.

Some time later she was busy undressing in her own room, when a faint

knock disturbed her. On opening the door, she found Mrs. Truxton standing in the hall, with a quilted wrapper drawn tight around her portly figure.

"I thought you hadn't gone to bed," she remarked, in a sibilant whisper that was more penetrating than an ordinary low-pitched voice. "I just could not go to bed"—selecting a large oak rocker—"until I had some explanation of this extraordinary affair. Will you please inform me what made that poor girl faint in the drawing-room?"

"She is in a very nervous, excitable condition, Cousin Kate, which reacts on her heart action."

Eleanor glanced despairingly at Mrs. Truxton. She knew that the latter was an inveterate, though kindly, gossip. Apparently she had come to stay for some time, as she sat rocking gently to and fro, her curl papers making a formidable halo around her soft, gray hair.

"Heart action?" echoed Mrs. Truxton. "That's as it may be. What was Captain Lane doing here?"

Eleanor started violently. She particularly wanted to keep the fact that Cynthia and Lane had been together a secret. She had watched for his arrival, had let him in before he had an opportunity to ring the front-door bell, and had shown him at once into the deserted drawing-room. During their interview, she had mounted guard in the hall. Hearing Lane's call for assistance, she had opened the drawing-room door, and, before summoning her uncle and the servants, had advised Lane to leave the house. She supposed he had followed her advice.

"Where in the world did you see him?" she asked.

"So he was here." Mrs. Truxton smiled delightedly, while Eleanor flushed with vexation as she realized she had given herself away unnecessarily. "Your uncle and Douglas were discussing politics, and I slipped away to remind Nicodemus to put some sandwiches in my room, as I always want a late supper, particularly after so early a dinner. As I walked through the billiard room on my way to the library, I happened to glance through the door

leading into the hall, and was surprised to see a man standing by the hatrack. As he raised his head, I thought I recognized Fred Lane. I wasn't quite sure, though, and before I could call his name, he had vanished."

"I see." Eleanor came to a quick resolution. "You have probably heard, Cousin Kate"—sitting down on the edge of her bed nearest the older woman—"that Fred Lane is very much in love with Cynthia." Mrs. Truxton nodded her head vigorously. "Eventually, after he had paid her a great deal of attention, they became engaged. Unfortunately"—Eleanor was feeling her way with care—"unfortunately, they had a lovers' quarrel. Cynthia refused to see Fred, and he finally came to me and asked me to arrange an interview, saying that he felt convinced, if given the opportunity, he could straighten out their misunderstanding."

Mrs. Truxton pondered some moments in silence. "Did this lovers' quarrel take place before Senator Carew's death?" she asked.

"Yes." Eleanor's blue eyes did not waver before Mrs. Truxton's piercing look. "Why?"

"I was just thinking that if Senator Carew had known of an engagement between a member of his family and a Lane, he'd have died of apoplexy—instead of having to be stabbed to death."

"What was the exact trouble between Senator Carew and Governor Lane, Cousin Kate?" asked Eleanor. "I never have heard."

"It began years ago." Mrs. Truxton hitched her chair close to the bed. "Governor Lane was an intimate friend of Philip Winthrop, senior, and, after the latter's marriage to Charlotte Carew, came frequently to Washington to visit them. To my thinking, Philip Winthrop was a bad egg, specious and handsome; and he took in the Carews completely, as well as Governor Lane. He was a stockbroker in Wall Street, and during a panic was ruined financially. He promptly committed suicide."

"Oh, poor Mrs. Winthrop!" exclaimed Eleanor warmly. "What hasn't she been through!"

"Well, losing her rascal of a husband was the least one of her troubles," said Mrs. Truxton dryly. "Philip Winthrop's failure was not an honorable one; there was talk of criminal proceedings. But all that was put a stop to by Senator Carew's stepping forward and paying his creditors." She paused for breath.

"I don't see what Governor Lane has to do with it," objected Eleanor, glancing meaningly at the clock, which was just striking one. She stifled a yawn.

"I am coming to that," explained Mrs. Truxton. "Philip Winthrop appealed to Governor Lane, among other of his old friends, to loan him money to tide over the financial crisis, and the governor trusted him to the extent of ten thousand dollars."

"That was exceedingly generous of him."

"Yes, and I reckon he repented of his generosity many times." Mrs. Truxton spoke with emphasis. "He loaned it to Winthrop without taking security, and without knowing that the latter was on the point of absolute failure. And this is where the row comes in. Lane went to Carew, and told him of the transaction, showed him the canceled check, and the latter, on finding that Lane had no promissory note or other security, declined to pay off the indebtedness."

"I see." Eleanor was paying full attention to the older woman.

"Lane was naturally incensed, for Carew had assumed all the other obligations, and he felt that his was a prior claim, being a debt of honor between friends. Carew didn't see it that way, and it led to a bitter quarrel. The ill feeling between the two men was intensified on Governor Lane's part because he met with financial reverses later, and the old Maryland homestead, which might have been saved by the return of the ten thousand dollars, was sold under the hammer."

"This is all news to me. I was told they were political enemies."

"They were. Lane vowed to get even in every way in his power, and so entered politics. He was a man of



"Look!" she cried, pointing toward the door. "My dream! See, the panels are in the shape of a cross!"

great force of character and intellectual ability—although lacking in business sense"—she interpolated—"and a born orator. And when he found, after having held several important State positions, that Senator Carew was going to run for governor of Maryland, he entered the field against him, and Carew was beaten by a few votes."

"When did this happen?"

"Oh, back in the early nineties. The quarrel was most acrimonious, particularly on Carew's side. He must have

realized that he had not acted fairly to his old friend. As long as he had assumed Winthrop's debts, it seemed only right that he should return the money owing to Lane. Public opinion was with the latter."

"Perhaps at that time he may not have had the ten thousand," suggested Eleanor. "I have always heard and believed the senator an honorable man; and certainly it was good of him to shoulder any of his brother-in-law's debts."

"He did it only to protect his sister, who was left penniless, and to quiet scandal."

"Mrs. Winthrop penniless! Why, how comes it, Cousin Kate, that she lives as she does?"

"Senator Carew gave her a large allowance. He always said that Cynthia should inherit his fortune."

"I never knew until the other day that Philip Winthrop was not Mrs. Winthrop's son."

"She adopted him legally, I believe, at the time of her husband's death, and persuaded her brother, the senator, to have him brought up as one of the family. Philip Winthrop's first wife was a South American, I am told. I never saw her, as she died before he came to Washington. Mercy on us!"—glancing at the clock. "I had no idea it was so late." She rose and started for the door. "How did you leave Cynthia?"

"Sound asleep, thank Heaven!"

"Did she and Fred Lane patch up their quarrel?"

"I am afraid not." Eleanor kissed her cousin a warm good night, and watched her cross the wide hall to her bedroom, then closed and locked her own door, and hastened to complete her undressing.

About three in the morning, Cynthia awoke and lay for a few minutes bewildered by her surroundings. Then recollection returned to her with a rush, and she sank back among her pillows with a half-strangled sob. Slowly she reviewed her interview with Fred, trying to find some solace, but she could discover none, and, with a moan, she turned on her side and buried her face in the pillow. Their romance had promised so much, and, instead, her happiness had been nipped in the bud.

She raised her hot face and glanced about, looking for a glass of water, for she was parched with thirst. Eleanor had forgotten, apparently, to place any drinking water in the room. Cynthia sat up and gazed eagerly around by the aid of the night light, but she could discover no glass on either the table or the bureau. She was on the point of

lying down again, when she remembered having seen a pitcher of ice water on a table near the head of the stairs. She reached out to ring the brass bell, but decided it would be cruel to call Eleanor, who had been up with her most of the night.

She pondered a moment, but her thirst was growing upon her, and, after a few minutes of indecision, she climbed out of the huge four-poster, and, getting into a wrapper and bedroom slippers, stole out of her room and down the hall in the direction of the stairs.

So intent was Cynthia on reaching her goal that she never noticed a figure crouching on the landing of the stairs, who drew back fearfully into the shadows at her approach. She found the ice pitcher on the table, with several glasses. Filling one of them, she took a long drink of the ice-cold water; then, feeling much refreshed, she refilled the glass, intending to take it with her to her room. She paused again, and looked about her with interest, for the hall was illuminated by the moonlight that streamed through the diamond-shaped panes of a window at one end of a wing of the house. The figure below her on the stair landing peered at her intently, poised for instant flight to the darker regions below in case she started to descend the stairs.

Cynthia was about to return to her room when her roving eyes fell on a closed door leading to a room in the wing. The moonlight was beating upon it. For one long second Cynthia stood transfixed; then she uttered a cry that roused the sleeping household—a cry of such terror that it froze the blood in the listeners' veins.

The figure on the landing stood glued to the spot until recalled to action by the hurried opening of doors. Then, with incredible swiftness, it vanished, as Eleanor, her hastily donned wrapper streaming in the wind, rushed to Cynthia's side.

"Good God! Cynthia! What is it?" she gasped, throwing her arms about her friend.

Cynthia caught her wrist in a grip

that made her wince. "Look!" she cried. "Look!" pointing toward the door at the end of the wing. "My dream! See, the panels are in the shape of a cross!"

Eleanor cast a startled glance in the direction indicated. It was true. The panels stood out in bold relief in the brilliant moonlight, and they formed an unmistakable Greek cross.

"Yes, yes, dear," she said soothingly. "It simply shows that your dream was founded on fact. Come to bed."

"No, no." Cynthia was trembling violently, but she refused to leave the spot. "You forget that in my dream the door is always locked."

"In this case it is not," exclaimed Colonel Thornton, who, with Douglas, had rushed into the hall as soon as they had struggled into some clothes. Mrs. Truxton brought up the rear, her curl papers standing upright, and her eyes almost popping from her head. "It's used simply as a storeroom," he added. "Don't be so worried, Cynthia," catching sight of her agonized face.

"I tell you it is locked!" She stamped her foot in her excitement.

For answer, Thornton stepped down the short hallway and turned the knob. To his intense surprise, the door did not open.

"Ah!" Her cry was half of triumph, half of agony. "I told you it was locked. It must be opened! I shall go mad if it is not!" And her looks did not belie her statement.

Douglas joined Thornton as he stood hesitating. "I think it would be best to humor her," he said, in an undertone.

Thornton nodded in agreement. "I can't understand how it got locked," he muttered. "How the devil can I get it open? It is English quartered oak."

"Is there any way of entering the room by a window?" asked Douglas.

"No, it's too high from the ground, and there's nothing but the bare brick wall to climb up. No tree grows near it," said Thornton thoughtfully. "And, unfortunately, I have no ladder long enough to reach the window."

"Then there's nothing left but to try and force the door." Douglas braced

his powerful shoulders against the panels until his muscles almost cracked under the strain. "Run against it," he gasped, perspiration trickling down his face, and Colonel Thornton obediently threw himself forward as the door gave slightly. "Again!" cried Douglas, and he threw his own weight on the panel, which yielded a little. "Once more!" And, with a rending crash, the upper and weaker panel splintered sufficiently to allow Douglas to slip his hand inside, and turn the key, which was in the lock. He also shot back the rusty bolt with difficulty, and withdrew his hand.

"Get the women back into their rooms," he whispered, his face showing white in the moonlight. "The room is full of escaping gas."

Thornton gazed blankly at him for a second, then turned to Mrs. Truxton. "Kate, I insist upon your taking these girls to your room." She nodded understandingly, and he turned to Cynthia with an air of command. "Go with Mrs. Truxton, Cynthia. I promise to come instantly and tell you what we discover in this room."

She nodded dumbly, past speech. The reaction had come, and Mrs. Truxton and Eleanor led her unresisting back to her room, and helped her to bed, where she lay, her eyes pleading to be relieved from her mental anguish.

Colonel Thornton and Douglas watched them until they disappeared inside the bedroom, then the latter opened the broken door of the locked room. An overpowering smell of illuminating gas choked them, and they drew back, gasping. Douglas stepped over to the hall window and threw up the sash, letting in the cool air. Then, holding his breath, he rushed inside the room, and, locating the escaping gas jet by the overpowering odor, reached up and turned off the cock of the wall bracket.

"It's no use; we'll have to wait and give the gas a chance to escape," he said, returning to the colonel's side. "Are you sure the room is unoccupied?"

Thornton's eyes were half starting from his head. "Unoccupied?" he stammered. "It's been unoccupied for half a century. This is the southwest

chamber which is supposed to be haunted by my great-aunt. A dog won't sleep there."

Douglas stared at his companion in amazement for some seconds, then, holding his breath, again bolted into the room. The gas almost overcame him, but, fortunately catching sight of the outlines of the windows, he opened first one and then the other, and rejoined the colonel as quickly as possible. Without speaking, they waited until the pure night air had swept away the last remnant of poisonous gas; then Douglas stepped inside the room, struck a match, and applied it to the chandelier. As the light flared up, a horrified exclamation escaped Thornton.

"Good God! Look!"

Douglas' eyes followed his outstretched arm. Stretched on the high four-poster bed was the body of a woman, lying on her side, her face concealed by the masses of dark hair that fell over it. A book lay by her side, one finger of her left hand caught between the pages. A droplight, minus shade and chimney, stood on a low table beside the bed.

Reverently the two men tiptoed to the bedside. Thornton laid a shaking hand on the droplight. "She must have been reading, and fallen asleep," he muttered between twitching lips. "She didn't know that the light is always blown out after eleven o'clock in this room."

Awe-struck, Douglas gazed down at the silent figure. No need to feel pulse or heart; to the most casual observer the woman was dead.

"Who—who—is it?" demanded a quivering voice behind them. Both men wheeled about to find Eleanor, white-lipped and trembling, standing there. She had stolen into the room without attracting their attention.

Douglas leaned forward and raised the strands of hair gently from the cold face.

"Annette!" Eleanor's trembling lips could hardly form the whisper; she swayed backward, and Douglas caught her as she fell.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

"Where's Brett?" asked Thornton, coming hurriedly into the library, where Douglas was seated at the telephone. The latter hung up the receiver before answering.

"He will be here directly, colonel. At present he is with the doctor and coroner in the southwest chamber. You had better sit down, sir," glancing with commiseration at Thornton's haggard face. But the colonel continued his nervous pacing to and fro.

"Jove!" he muttered. "This affair has given me a devilish shock." He paused before a small wall cabinet, and, selecting a key on his ring bunch, opened the door and took out a decanter.

"Will you join me?" he asked, placing it on the table with several tumblers.

"No, thanks, colonel." Douglas heard the glass click faintly against the mouth of the decanter as the colonel poured out a liberal portion, which he drank neat. He was replacing the decanter in the wall cabinet when Brett, followed by the coroner, walked into the room.

"If you have no objection, Colonel Thornton, we will hold an informal investigation here," said Doctor Penfield courteously.

"Not at all, sir, not at all," exclaimed Thornton heartily. "I am most anxious to have this terrible affair cleared up as soon as possible. Simply state your wishes, and they will be carried out to the best of my ability."

"Thanks." The coroner seated himself at the mahogany table standing in the center of the room, and drew out his notebook and fountain pen, while Brett established himself on the opposite side.

"Shall I retire?" inquired the colonel.

"I think it would be best," replied Doctor Penfield gravely. "I prefer to examine the members of the household separately. No offense is intended."

"And none is taken." Thornton smiled wearily. "You forget I'm a lawyer, doctor, and understand your

position. If you wish to see me, I will be in my room."

"All right, colonel." The coroner consulted his notebook as Thornton left them, then turned to Douglas. "You were the first to enter the southwest chamber, were you not?"

"Yes. I broke in a panel of the door with Colonel Thornton's assistance, and we—"

"One moment." Penfield held up his hand. "Was the door locked on the inside?"

"Yes, by an old-fashioned bolt as well as by lock and key."

"Did the bolt and lock work stiffly?"

"They did."

"In your opinion, would a person locking the door and shooting the bolt into place make enough noise to awaken the sleeper?"

"I think so—yes."

"Did you find the windows of the room also bolted when you entered?"

"No. They were closed, but the bolts, which are similar to the one on the door, only smaller, were not fastened."

"I see." Penfield drummed on the table for a moment with his left hand. "Could any one have slipped past you and Colonel Thornton when you stood waiting in the hallway for the gas to escape?"

"No, we would have been sure to see them, and, besides, no one could have remained in that room alive; the escaping gas was overpowering."

"Did the room have no other exit except the one door leading to the hall?"

"That is the only one I could discover. I searched the room thoroughly with Brett." The detective nodded affirmatively. "We could find no trace of any other entrance or exit."

"Strange!" exclaimed Penfield. "The windows are at too great a height from the ground, and can be reached only by a scaling ladder."

"And, beside that," put in Brett, "I've examined the ground under and near the two windows of that room, and there isn't a trace of a footstep or a ladder anywhere around."

The coroner laid down his pen. "I think that is all just now, Mr. Hunter.

Brett, will you ask Doctor Marsh to step here?"

The two men left the room.

"I'll wait in the drawing-room, Brett," called Douglas, as the detective started upstairs to find the doctor.

In a few minutes, Brett reappeared in the library with Doctor Marsh.

"I won't detain you long, doctor," began Penfield. "Be seated. You were the first to examine the dead woman upstairs. What do you think caused her death?"

"She was asphyxiated by illuminating gas. Every symptom points to that. Of course," added the doctor cautiously, "this cannot be proved absolutely until the autopsy is held."

"I think you are right. My diagnosis coincides with yours," said the coroner. "Did you discover any evidence of a struggle, or marks of violence, about the woman's person?"

"No. Judging from what I found—and I believe nothing had been disturbed by either Colonel Thornton or Mr. Hunter—I think that the Frenchwoman was reading in bed, fell asleep, and was overcome by the gas."

"How long do you think she had been dead before you reached her?"

"Several hours, judging from the condition of the body. She was lying in such a position that she got the full force of the gas directly in her face; the room did not have to become filled with the deadly fumes before she was affected by them."

"I noticed that," exclaimed the coroner. "The droplight stood on a low stand, so that the gas fixture was on a level with the woman's head, as the four-poster bed was an unusually high one. I have no further questions to ask just now, doctor. An autopsy will be held this afternoon at the city morgue, where the body will be taken shortly. Brett, ask Miss Cynthia Carew to come here."

Doctor Marsh stopped on his way to the door. "I have just given Miss Carew an opiate," he said quickly. "She must not be disturbed at present."

The coroner's face fell. "That's too bad," he grumbled. "I particularly

wanted to ask what she was doing in the hall at that hour, and what drew her attention to the closed door."

"As it happens, I can answer those two questions." Marsh returned to the table. "Before I could quiet Miss Carew, she repeated her experiences a dozen times. It seems that she was thirsty, and went into the hall to get a glass of water, as she recollected seeing an ice pitcher and tumblers on the hall table near the stairs. She drank some water, and was returning when she noticed the door in the moonlight, dropped the glass she was carrying, and screamed."

"I found a broken glass lying in the hall," supplemented Brett.

"What was it about the door that caused her to scream?" asked the coroner.

"The panels, which are made in the shape of a Greek cross," explained Marsh. "It seems that Miss Carew apparently suffers from a nightmare which takes the form of a door with panels of that shape. She declares it always foretells disaster. When she found such a door confronting her in the ghostly moonlight, it was too much for her nerves, and she screamed."

"What is all this I am told about the southwest chamber being haunted?"

Marsh shrugged his shoulders. "I have resided all my life in Georgetown, and have always heard that a room in this house was supposed to be haunted. That particular kind of door with the panels forming a cross is called the 'witches' door,' and it was put there in the days just after the Revolution. It is to ward off evil, so the legend goes."

"Well, it doesn't seem to have fulfilled its mission." The coroner carefully turned a page in his notebook, and made an entry. "I am very much obliged to you, doctor," as Marsh prepared to depart. "I wish you would let me know when Miss Carew is in fit condition to see me."

"I will; good-by," and the busy physician beat a hasty retreat.

"Suppose you get the butler, Brett,"

said the coroner, when the two men were alone.

"May I suggest, Doctor Penfield, that you allow Mr. Hunter to be present when the servants are examined?" began Brett. "He is deeply interested in the murder of Senator Carcw, and is assisting me in trying to unravel that mystery, and I think"—deliberately—"this French maid's singular death has something to do with the other tragedy."

"Indeed?" The coroner's eyes kindled with fresh interest. "Certainly, Brett, if you think Mr. Hunter should be present, call him in."

The detective hastened out of the room, to return within a few minutes with Douglas and Nicodemus. The old darky was gray with fright, and his eyes had not regained their natural size since he had been wakened by the noise attending the breaking in of the door. He had lain in his bed, too frightened to get up until Douglas had entered his room, hauled him out from under the bedclothes, and made him go downstairs and build the fire for the cook, Sophy, who was more composed than her brother, and busied herself in preparing coffee and an early breakfast for those who desired it.

"Is there such a thing as a long scaling ladder on the premises?" inquired the coroner, after he had asked Nicodemus' full name and length of service.

"No, suh; dey isn't, only a pa'r ob steps so high," demonstrating with his hand. "Dat's der onliest one on de place."

"Is any house being built in this neighborhood?"

"No, suh, dar isn't."

"How did you come to put the maid in that room?"

"I didn't put her dar," in quick defense. "She went dar ob her own accord. 'Deed dat's so, Marse Douglas," appealing to him directly. "De cunnel, he done tole Sophy an' me ter fix three rooms fo' de ladies, an' a room fo' yo', suh. He doan' say nuffin' about de maid, Annette."

"Then you were not expecting her?"

"No, suh. I was 'sprised when Miss Eleanor brunged her. After I haid

shown de ladies ter dey rooms, I took Annette up ter de third flo', an' tole her she could take de front room dar."

"Then how did she come to be occupying the other room?" asked the coroner quickly.

"It were dis-away, suh. Jes' befo' dinnah she cum ter me an' Sophy, an' say she doan' like de room in de third flo'—"

"Why not?" broke in Penfield.

"She said it were too far off from her folks, dat she had to be down whar she could hear dem. I tole her dat der warn't no room down on de second flo', dat dey was all occupied, an' she says, quicklike, dat she had jes' been in de room in de wing, an' dat she'd sleep dar."

"Ah, then it was her own suggestion that she should occupy the room?" exclaimed Brett quickly.

"Yessir. She done say dat de bed looked comfo'ble, an' dat she'd jes' take de bedclothes offer de bed in de room on de third flo', an' move her things down inter de odder room. Sophy tole her dat de place were mighty dusty, 'cause it's been used as a storeroom, but Annette said she'd 'tend ter dat."

"Did she speak to Colonel Thornton or to Miss Eleanor before moving into the room?" asked Douglas thoughtfully.

"No, suh, I don't think she did. I axed her ef she had, an' she said dat dey was all in de drawin'-room waitin' fer dinneh, an' dat she didn't want ter 'sturb 'em, an' dat dey wouldn't care whar she slep'."

"Then no one knew she was occupying that room except you and Sophy?" asked the puzzled coroner.

"No, suh; 'less she tole dem later. I done warned her dat dat room were unlucky"—Nicodemus' eyes rolled in his head—"an' dat no good would cum ob her sleepin' dar, an' she jes' larf an' larf. An' now she's daid." He shook his woolly head solemnly. "It doan' do ter trifle wid ghosts."

"I won't keep you any longer," said the coroner, after a long pause. "Send Sophy up here, Nicodemus. By the way, is she any relation of yours?"

"Yessir. She's ma sister, an' we've bof worked hyar since befo' de wah. I'll send her right up, suh," and he disappeared.

Sophy was not long in coming, and she confirmed all that Nicodemus had said. She added that the southwest chamber had not been occupied as a bed-chamber for years, although the four-poster bed had been left standing, with its mattresses and pillows in place; after which she was excused. Colonel Thornton was then sent for by the coroner.

"Your servants say, colonel, that you did not expect your niece to bring her French maid, Annette, with her last night," began Penfield. "Is that so?"

"My niece is at liberty to bring any one"—with emphasis—"to this house," said Colonel Thornton. "But I must admit that I did not know until just as dinner was announced that the maid had accompanied her."

"Did you not see them arrive?" asked Brett.

"No, they came earlier than I anticipated, and I was not in the house when they reached here."

"Did Nicodemus inform you that the maid was here?"

"No; why should he? He knows that this is my niece's second home, and that she is virtually mistress of the house."

"Then your niece is thoroughly acquainted with this building?" put in Brett.

"Haven't I just said so," impatiently. "Miss Thornton brought her maid with her, because she knows I have but two old servants, enough for my bachelor needs, but she very naturally considered that my other guests, Mrs. Truxton and Miss Carew, might desire a maid's services."

"I understand. Were you aware that Annette intended to sleep in the southwest chamber?"

"I was not. If I had known it, I would not have permitted her to occupy the room."

"Please tell me the exact superstition that hangs about that room," said the coroner, after a brief pause.



"Stand back," he growled between clenched teeth. "I'll go with you peaceably. Let me tell you, Brett!"—glaring defiantly at him—"you'll live to regret this day's work."

"It is believed that no light can be burned in that room after eleven o'clock; after that time it is always extinguished by some mysterious agency."

"How comes it, then, that you al-

lowed gas pipes to be placed in the room?"

"I gave the contract to have gas put in the house years ago, at the same time that I had running water and plumbing

installed. The gas contractor naturally fitted each room with modern appliances. As the room is never used after dark, I never gave the matter another thought."

"Then why was a droplight fastened to the wall bracket by the side of the bed?"

"I've been puzzling over that fact myself." The colonel tipped his chair back on two legs. "That droplight is one I used to have in my bedroom. It didn't give very satisfactory light to read by, so several months ago I purchased another, transferred the chimney and shade to the new lamp, and sent the other one into the storeroom."

"Then it is highly probable that Annette found it there, and, wishing to read in bed, attached it to the bracket herself."

"And thereby sealed her own fate," added the colonel solemnly.

"Do you really think that supernatural means caused her death?" asked the coroner incredulously.

"It seems to be either that, or suicide."

"From what I hear, I incline to the latter theory," acknowledged Doctor Penfield. "I don't take much stock in ghosts or other hallucinations, colonel, with all due respect to you, sir. Will you be so kind as to ask your cousin, Mrs. Truxton, to step here for a few minutes?"

On being summoned by Colonel Thornton, Mrs. Truxton hastened into the library. As her statements added nothing to what the coroner already knew, she was quickly excused, and Eleanor Thornton sent for.

Douglas had not seen her since carrying her to her room some hours before, and he was shocked by her appearance. "My precious darling!" he murmured, in a tone that reached her ear alone, as he opened the library door to admit her. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

She shook her head and smiled at him, a smile that hurt him woefully, for it showed the effort it cost her. Doctor Penfield, struck by her beauty, which was enhanced by her unnaturally

flushed cheeks and the dark shadows under her large eyes, rose and pulled forward a chair for her use.

"I won't detain you long, Miss Thornton," he commenced, reseating himself. "Did you know your maid was sleeping in the southwest chamber?"

"No, I did not. On the contrary, she told me, when helping me change my dress for dinner, that she had been put in the room over mine."

"When did you last see your maid?"

"She came to my assistance when Miss Carew fainted, shortly after dinner. After I had seen Miss Carew revived and put in bed, I had Annette help me out of my evening dress, and then told her to go to bed, as I would not require her services any longer."

"At what hour was that?"

"Shortly before ten o'clock. I do not recollect the exact time."

"Did she say nothing to you then about having moved down on your floor?"

"Not a word."

"Has your maid had an unfortunate love affair?" inquired the coroner.

"Not to my knowledge."

"Has she been despondent of late?"

"No; she seemed in her usual good spirits."

"Do you know if she had lost money?"

"I never heard her mention such a thing."

"Has she been with you long?"

"About two years."

"And you found her?"

"Excellent in every way; honest, reliable, and capable."

"Miss Thornton"—facing her directly—"have you formed any theory as to how your maid came to be asphyxiated?"

"I think it was due to an accident. She probably fell asleep, leaving the gas burning."

"But Mr. Hunter found the two windows closed; no possible draft could get into the room to blow out the light—nor could any person have blown it out, for the door, the only means of entrance, was locked on the inside.

How was it possible to have an accident under those circumstances?"

"Possibly it was suicide, though I cannot bear to think so." Eleanor spoke with much feeling.

"Miss Thornton." Brett rose, walked over to the table, and stood looking directly down into the lovely face raised so confidently to his. "Did your maid ever utter any threats against Captain Frederick Lane in your presence?"

"Never." Eleanor's eyes opened in surprise.

"Did she ever insinuate that he had something to do with the murder of Senator Carew?"

"No, never." But Eleanor's firm voice quivered as she uttered the denial, and Brett detected it. His eyes lighted with excitement.

"What was Captain Lane doing here last night?"

The question was unexpected, and Eleanor started perceptibly.

"He came to see Miss Carew," she admitted faintly.

"Did he see your maid?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Did Captain Lane spend the evening with you and Colonel Thornton?"

"Oh, no; he saw only Miss Carew."

"How long was he with Miss Carew?"

"About ten minutes."

"Indeed." Brett paused, and spoke with greater deliberation. "Captain Lane, who is being shadowed by several of my men, was seen to enter this house last night between nine and half past, and though my men waited all night, he was never seen to leave it."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE NAME OF THE LAW.

"Well, and what then?" demanded a curt voice behind the group. The three men and Eleanor wheeled around and gazed at the young officer in surprise too deep for words. "Well, what then?" demanded Captain Lane, for the second time.

"How did you get here?" asked Brett, recovering from his surprise.

"Through the door; how did you suppose?" with a flicker of amusement in his handsome eyes. "The butler told me I would find you here when he admitted me a few seconds ago." Then his face grew stern, "I entered in time to overhear your remark," turning directly to Brett. "Because your men did not see me leave the house, it doesn't follow that I spent the night here."

"Then where did you spend it?" asked Brett swiftly.

"With my cousin, General Phillips, at his apartment at the Dupont," calmly.

"At what hour did you reach his apartment?"

"About twelve o'clock."

"And where were you between the hours of nine-thirty and twelve?"

"Most of the time walking the streets."

"Alone?"

"Alone." Lane faced them all, head up and shoulders back, and gave no sign that he was aware of the antagonism that he felt in the tense atmosphere. The coroner was the next to speak.

"Suppose you take a chair, Captain Lane, and give us a more detailed account of your actions last night," he suggested, and Lane dragged forward a chair and seated himself. "When did you leave this house?"

"About half past ten o'clock." He caught Eleanor's start of surprise, and added hastily: "I am, as perhaps you already know, engaged to Miss Carew. During our interview last night she fainted, and I summoned Miss Thornton, who urged me to go, but I felt that I could not leave the house until I knew that Miss Carew was better. So, instead of going out of the front door, I picked up my coat and hat, and slipped into the dining room, which was empty."

"What was your object in going there?"

"I hoped that Miss Thornton would come downstairs again, and I could then get an opportunity to speak to her."

"Would it not have been better and more straightforward to have stepped into the library, and informed Colonel

Thornton of your presence in his house?" asked the coroner dryly.

Lane flushed at his tone. "Possibly it would," haughtily, "but I was acting on impulse. I was extremely alarmed by Miss Carew's condition, and could think of nothing else."

"What caused Miss Carew's indisposition?" inquired the coroner.

"She is not strong, and overtaxed her strength yesterday."

The coroner did not press the point, to Lane's relief. "Did any one see you in the dining room last night?"

"I think not; the room was not lighted, and the table had been already cleared, so no servant entered the room."

"Did you see Miss Thornton again?"

"No. I had not been waiting long before I saw Colonel Thornton come down the stairs with a man whom I judged to be a physician. As they passed the dining-room door, I heard the doctor tell Colonel Thornton that Miss Carew had regained consciousness, and would be all right after a night's rest. A few minutes after that I left the house."

"How?"

"I have dined frequently with Colonel Thornton, and know the house fairly well; so, as I had promised to keep my visit to Miss Carew a secret, I opened the long French window that gives on the south veranda, ran down the steps, and walked down the garden path, jumped the fence between this property and the next, and walked out of their gate into the street."

Brett said something under his breath that was not complimentary to his detective force. "May I ask you why you thought such precautions necessary?" he inquired.

"Because I was perfectly aware that I had been followed over here," retorted Lane calmly. "And as I considered it nobody's business but my own if I chose to call on Miss Carew, I decided to avoid them."

"And what did you and Annette, Miss Thornton's French maid, discuss before you left here?" Brett rose to

his feet and confronted Lane squarely, as he put the question.

"I did not speak to any one except Miss Carew and Miss Thornton while in this house," steadily.

"No? Then, perhaps, you only saw the maid, Annette, when she was *asleep*?" with emphasis.

"I don't catch your meaning?" Lane tapped his foot nervously with his swagger stick.

"Listen to me, Captain Lane." Brett dropped back in his chair and emphasized his remarks by frequent taps on the table with his left hand. "You can't dodge the issue with fake testimony."

"I am dodging nothing." Lane's eyes flashed ominously, and his voice deepened, the voice of a born fighter accustomed to command. "I have no testimony to fake."

"I suppose you will say next," sarcastically, "that you don't know the maid, Annette, is dead."

"Dead?" echoed Lane, bounding from his chair.

"Dead—murdered last night."

"Good God!" There was no mistaking Lane's agitation and surprise. Brett watched him closely; if he was acting, it was a perfect performance. "How—what killed her?"

"Asphyxiated by illuminating gas," briefly, "when asleep last night."

"This is horrible!" Lane paced the floor in uncontrollable excitement. "But what"—pulling himself up—"what has that unfortunate girl's death to do with me?"

"What had *you* to do with the unfortunate girl's death is more to the point," retorted Brett meaningly, and Lane went white to the lips.

"By God! I'll not stand such an insinuation." He made a threatening step toward Brett, who did not move. "Are you such a fool as to imagine, because I was in this house for a short time last night, that I killed a servant whom I had seen occasionally when she opened the door for me on my calling at Miss Thornton's residence?"

"I am not a fool, nor am I a believer in miracles." Brett grew cool as Lane's excitement rose. "I was to have seen

Annette this morning to get sworn testimony which she said would implicate you in Senator Carew's murder." Lane staggered back, appalled. "Instead, I find her dead, under mysterious circumstances. You are the only person whom her death benefits; and you were in this house unknown to the inmates, and by your own admission no one saw you leave it. It is stretching the probabilities to suppose her death was a coincidence. You, and you alone"—his voice rang out clearly—"had the motive and the opportunity to bring about her death."

"I deny it—deny it absolutely!" thundered Lane, his knuckles showing white, so tightly were his fingers clenched over his swagger stick, which he raised threateningly.

"Stop, Mr. Brett!" exclaimed Eleanor, who, with Douglas and the coroner, had sat too astounded to speak during the rapid colloquy between the two men. "You forget that the door to the southwest chamber occupied by Annette was locked on the *inside* and that door was the only means of entering the room. It is only fair to you, Captain Lane"—turning courteously to the young officer—"to remind Mr. Brett of the very obvious fact that no one could have entered the sleeping woman's room, blown out the light, and, on leaving the room, locked and bolted the door on the *inside* leaving the key in the lock."

"Thanks!" exclaimed Lane gratefully, as he sat down and wiped the perspiration from his white face.

Brett scowled. He had hoped that his summing up of damaging facts, and his sudden accusation, might wring a confession from Lane, or, if not, that some slip of the tongue that the other might make in his agitation might give him a clew as to how the murder was committed. He was convinced of Lane's guilt. He glanced angrily at Eleanor. Why had she intervened? Long and silently he gazed at the beautiful face. The broad forehead, delicately arched eyebrows, the large, wistful eyes, shaded by curling eyelashes,

and the finely chiseled features were well worth looking at, but Brett did not see them. A new problem was puzzling his active brain.

"I understood you to say, Captain Lane, that you had promised to keep your visit here a secret," he said, breaking into the conversation of the others. "To whom did you make such a promise?"

"To Miss Thornton." The question was unexpected and the answer slipped out thoughtlessly; then Lane bit his lip as he caught Eleanor's warning glance too late.

Brett turned swiftly on Eleanor. "Why did you wish him to keep his visit here a secret, Miss Thornton?"

"Because I was afraid Mrs. Winthrop would hear that Captain Lane and her niece had met here; my uncle might inadvertently mention it to her. Mrs. Winthrop does not approve of Captain Lane's attentions to Miss Carew," explained Eleanor quietly.

"On what grounds?" quickly.

"Ask Mrs. Winthrop; she can tell you better than I."

"I will," grimly. "Captain Lane," wheeling around, "why have you returned to this house at so early an hour in the morning?"

"I came to inquire for Miss Carew. I asked to see Miss Thornton, and the butler showed me into this room. And this is the first opportunity I have had, Miss Eleanor, to ask you how Cynthia is this morning." His face betrayed his anxiety.

"She is asleep just now," answered Eleanor, "but I hope she will be much better when she wakes up. I will tell her that you have called."

"Thanks!" Lane rose. He felt that he was dismissed. "Has Cynthia been told of Annette's death?"

"Not yet. We explained the breaking in of the door of the southwest chamber by saying that Nicodemus had locked it, and neglected to tell Colonel Thornton, who had had it forced open."

"I understand." Lane shook hands with her warmly. "Will you please telephone me how Cynthia is? I'll be

at the Army and Navy Club all day. Good morning." He bowed formally to the coroner and Douglas, then turned to leave the room, only to find his exit barred by Brett.

"It is my duty to inform you, Captain Lane, that a warrant has been sworn out for your arrest," he announced, taking a paper from his pocket.

Lane stepped back involuntarily. "What do you mean?" he stammered.

"In the name of the law, I arrest you for the murder of Senator Carew." Brett ceased speaking, and signaled to

two men who were sitting in the hall to enter the room.

It was some seconds before Lane broke the strained silence.

"Stand back," he growled between clenched teeth, as the two detectives approached him. "I'll go with you peaceably. Let me tell you, Brett"—glaring defiantly at him—"you'll live to regret this day's work. Who swore out that warrant?"

"Mrs. Winthrop."

Lane gazed at him in dazed surprise. "Mrs. Winthrop!" he mumbled. "Mrs. Winthrop!"

The end of this story will appear in the April number.



The Castle

WHEN old winter camps about,
All in mail bedight;
When descends the whirling rout,
And the early night;

Though the frost numbs wood and lea,
Midst the gathering snows,
Snugly castled, what care we,
As our firelight glows!

Ours the wizardry of hand
In fond hand's entwine;
Ours the ward of threshold spanned
By love's magic line.

Rage thy worst, oh, winter host!
Fear we naught thereof.

By the fire our lips give toast:

"Home, and Hearth, and Love."

EDWIN L. SABIN.



Mutiny!

By Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED BY H.V. MAYER

WE was out on the brig *St. Regis*,
A-drinkin' our Oolong tea,
When life it got awful tejis
To the maritime hearts o' we.

For our captin', Marmaduke Percy,
Was generous to a fault
And his heart was as full o' mercy
As the ocean is full o' salt.

We each had a porcelain tub, sir;
He taught us to sing and dance;
We'd a chef that could cook our grub,
sir,
In the styles that they make in France.

At night we wore silk pajamas,
By day we drunk Munich beer—
It was nigh to the West Bahamas
That we started to mutineer.

We riz without showin' mercy,
A-singin' rebellious tunes;
And we galloped for Captin' Percy
With pistols and knives and spoons.

He fell on his knees, astonished,
Took back by our look amiss.
"Oh, gentlemen," he admonished,
"Pray what is the cause o' this?"

Says Lemuel Scraggs, our spokesman,
"Aye, captin', I speak you true.
Without nary frills nor jokes, man,
The cause o' this row is you.

"We shipped for this cruise in our blindness,
Expectin' the usual deal—
But you've hardened our hearts with kind-
ness,
And deep is the grudge we feel.

"You bunk us in Pullman beds, sir,
You dope us with fragrant wine;
But mutiny fills our hearts, sir,
As fer strenuous days we pine.

"Aye, at night we all toss and groan some
With deadly and dolorous sound;
For we're awfully, awfully lonesome
For a boss that'll kick us round!"

Then the capting riz in his action
And he says to the crew, says he,
"In the giving of satisfaction
My lovingest thought shall be.

"And if comfort with you is lacking,
It isn't because I try——"
He closed this remark by whacking
Bill Thompkins athwart the eye.

And then in a wrestling match way
He kicked Lem Scraggs in the bib,
Tossed Ichabod Jones down a hatchway
And fractured the carpenter's rib.

That night we slep on bare boards, sir,
And we dined upon sowbelly stew;
Next morning, as jolly as lords, sir,
We riz, quite a different crew.

So we went with our hats in our hands, sir,
And we stood in respectful line
Addressin' the capting, "Land, sir!
Our sentiments now is fine!

"You can feed us on fancy truffles
And bed us in silk and down,
Surround us with rugs and ruffles;
But our thoughts will be dull and brown.

"But the capting who'd keep things humpin'
In the midst o' the ocean blue
Must pick up a club or sumpin'
And git in touch with his crew!"



The Demon and Miss Brook

BY RALPH BERGENGREN



ILLUSTRATED BY MARY R. BASSETT

HARKINS & PARKER, INC., were bright young men who, without the advantage of a correspondence - school education, had built

up a successful business in the writing of booklets. Some men will succeed in spite of everything. Parker, for example, had left college handicapped by the idea that he was destined to write the Great American Novel, but he had learned to write booklets. Harkins was the superior mind in persuading doubting Thomases that booklets ought to be written. He could persuade a dealer in tombstones that if the illuminating booklet, "What to Wear; When to Wear; How to Wear," sold the garments of Fitt, Cutter & Drape to the youth of Skowhegan, Maine, Alfalfa, Texas, and Pipe Stem, Arizona—why, evidently an equally attractive booklet would induce the converted tribes of West Africa to send to the United States for their tombstones. Thus it followed that Harkins was often away in distant cities, booming booklets, while Parker, with the help of Miss Carol Brook, typewriter girl, and Master Joseph Brennan, office boy, held down the home office, and supplied the product.

Concerning Carol, no comic-weekly humorist would have suspected her of being a typewriter. She had serious brown eyes, a neat, but normal, figure, and soft brown hair, which she parted in the middle, and coiled up in an unassuming, but delightful, way at the back. She had been with Harkins &

Parker, Inc., ever since the firm established its small suite of offices in the Marshmallow Building, so called because it stood a towering and profitable memorial to the splendid genius that had first thought of starting a mail-order business in that pleasingly sticky confection. Her relations with her employers were at once formal and informal. There was respect and liking on both sides, also, courtesy, and a definite separation between private and business interests. What might be the existence of Mr. Harkins and Mr. Parker outside the office—except as it concerned booklets—was unknown to Miss Brook. She was convinced that they were both "gentlemen," and that her attitude toward them was serenely impartial. But about her attitude, Miss Brook a little deceived herself. A keen observer might have discovered that she typed a shade more conscientiously for Mr. Harkins, when he was at headquarters, and dictating letters on his own indefatigable and resistless follow-up system, than she did for his partner. Joseph held secretly that she was "soft" on Harkins.

We come to the story.

Parker had come in early, unlocking the door with his latchkey, and absently picking up his own letters from the accumulation of mail under the letter slot. He was always somewhat absent-minded when in the midst of a booklet. His desk stood as he had left it the night before, for he had worked late, and now proposed to work early. He was a cheerful-looking young man, just turned thirty, with a tendency to take on flesh already making him a bit roly-poly. He sat down at his desk and

ran over his letters. One was a post card that didn't belong to him. He stood it up against the ink bottle. The address told that it was for Miss Carol Brook. The message on the other side had his partner's characteristic brevity:

Back Thursday. Don't forward any more mail.
HARKINS.

That was all. Berwick Harkins saved his oratory for possible customers.

The reader has been let into the fact that Harry Parker's mind, like so many other great cerebral machines, was remote from other matters when engaged upon the task to which it was best adapted. He wrote some sentences on a sheet of yellow paper. Evidently they did not satisfy him, for he tore the sheet into very small pieces. Then he got up, lit a pipe, perambulated the office, sat down, spread out another sheet of paper, and scowled at it. He had a train of thought coming, but it was delayed somewhere. He began to draw little men on the sheet of paper. His mind was elsewhere, probably looking anxiously up the line. Six little men, with round bodies, and spidery arms and legs—the kind we can all draw—appeared on the paper. And then, still as one in a dream of the Perfect Booklet, Harry Parker reached for the post card. He began idly imitating his partner's handwriting.

Then the train of thought came into the station. He put the post card back against the ink bottle, and got seriously to work on his booklet. His one idea in life was to show a close-shaven age that, no matter what kind of a razor it used, the true secret of shaving lay in using it in front of "Peter's Little Wonder Shaving Mirror." He wrote:

You can't shave properly unless you see yourself as others see you. With the Little Wonder Shaving Mirror, you *know* what you are doing because you *see* what you are doing. Yes, sir, right up to your ear! The best razor, in the most perfect condition, cannot give a man that barberlike shave unless he *sees where he is using it*. The barber himself—

Joseph, arriving at his usual hour, interrupted the flow of ideas by opening

the door of the outer office. Mr. Parker looked up. His rambling eye took in a post card leaning against an ink bottle, and addressed to:

MISS CAROL BROOK.
The Perfect Booklet,
Marshmallow Building.

He half suspended his mental activity.

"Joseph!"

The boy came in from the outer office.

"Put this post card on Miss Brook's desk. I brought it in by accident with my own mail. And close the door after you as you go out."

He continued his paragraph, having kept firm hold on his idea till the door closed:

The barber himself, nuisance as he is to busy men, has held his own for just this reason. When the barber shaves you, he *shaves you completely* because he *sees you completely*. But with the Little Wonder Shaving Mirror—

On the other side of the closed door Joseph stared at the post card, grinned, scratched his head, and finally put the missive on Carol Brook's desk.

"Dere ought to be a bunch o' roses or fergit-me-nixes to go wid it," he commented.

He proceeded to dust, restraining a tendency to whistle. Whistling was an accomplishment firmly discouraged in office boys by Harkins & Parker, Inc. It interfered with the production of the Perfect Booklet. Now and then he looked at the clock, and from the clock to the post card. Miss Brook was not due to arrive till eight-thirty.

She came in promptly, taking off her hat and coat at the corner closet, and giving her neat, brown hair an adjusting pat before she went to her desk. The post card, address side up, lay in the cleared space. The girl turned it over, and stared at the message. Joseph, watching, saw the back of her neck crimson. She was used to the direct brevity of Mr. Harkins' correspondence, but not to:

Back Thursday, dear. Don't forward any more mail unless you feel like writing yourself.
HARKINS.

Such a message upset Miss Brook's world completely. There it was, written on a post card! Little as she knew Mr. Harkins outside the office, she had known him for five years in it. And she had been sure he was a gentleman. She had been proud of her employers, although she had never had any other employers with whom to compare them, for she had come to Harkins & Parker, Inc., straight from the business school. To the business school she had come straight from her own family. There were so many of them. All girls! And her father a small-town doctor in New Hampshire.

And now this—on a post card!

And from Mr. Harkins!

And—

Carol's first impulse was to give up her position immediately—but could she show such a message to Mr. Parker? Could she explain at home that her employer had insulted her? Had Mr. Harkins really, intentionally, meant to insult her—or did he drink? The Demon Rum, looming up unexpectedly in the background of Mr. Harkins' existence, suggested suddenly the only possible explanation. For surely Mr. Harkins could not have been himself when he wrote that message.

He had been on a spree, probably with some wretched man whom he had persuaded to order a booklet. That was it. A spree! Miss Carol Brook's mouth, ordinarily a pretty mouth, curled contemptuously—but her brown eyes misted. He simply wouldn't have done such a thing when he was himself. He couldn't. She was sure of that. But to think that there were times when he was not himself! Of course, they didn't happen very often, or in five years she would have noticed something. When men do such things as that, thought Carol, it shows in their eyes; and Berwick Harkins' were blue and clear as the pool in the hills at home when it reflected the blue sky. He did smoke. She seemed at the moment to see his thin fingers curling round the bowl of his pipe as he dictated his follow-up letters, striding back and forth, with the other hand in his pocket.

But smoking wasn't drinking. And perhaps the sprees were only just beginning to happen! And this was Thursday. He might be in this very morning—

Joseph snickered.

"Something funny, Joseph?" asked Miss Brook quietly, putting the post card out of sight in an upper drawer, and lifting the center of her desk, out of which a typewriter arose like a fairy in a pantomime.

Joseph, to be perfectly frank, didn't like Miss Brook. She had no lively idea of humor, like Miss deVries, in the office where he had worked previously. She had no real style about her; she struck Joseph as "feeling too good for her job," and at the same time annoyed him because he couldn't quite prove it, even to his own satisfaction. There was something, he couldn't have told you what, that made him afraid of her. The idea of being afraid of a typewriter who got affectionate messages from the boss, written on a post card, for all the world to rubber at! Joseph shrugged his shoulders, and felt himself an office boy of the world.

"I see a funny post card this mornin'," said Joseph, "and I laughs when I thinks of it."

Miss Brook bent her flushed face over the typewriter, and tremulously arranged a sheet of carbon between two sheets of white paper. She dared not look at Joseph, but she became conscious of a low humming, not loud enough to reach Mr. Parker, which resolved itself into a melody.

"When she left the village she was shy.

But alas! and alack!

She came back,

With a naughty little twinkle in her eye,"

hummed Joseph. Carol, trying to drown the melody with the click of her typewriter keys, was glad when his employer's bell summoned him to the inner office.

He came back with several sheets of yellow paper, the beginnings of the booklet that was to revolutionize shaving, and for once Carol was glad that Mr. Parker's first draft presented a puzzle that it needed all her mental con-



Joseph, watching, saw the back of her neck crimson.

centration to resolve into a neat page of copy. Parker began with a kind of island of words in a sea of yellow paper, and then filled the sea with corrections in two colors of ink. Carol, reducing the puzzle to neat type, also established a kind of island, in order that her employer might again fill in the border with improvements on his original statements. Mr. Parker, with his mental eye on the Perfect Booklet, would never, for example, rest content with such a phrase as "the best razor in the most perfect condition." Too academic! Too lifeless! "The head barber's pet razor" was better. Booklets, in Mr. Parker's opinion, might not be immortal, but they were art. When

he had messed up a sheet of manuscript until he could no longer comprehend it himself, then was the time for Carol to reduce it to visible order, and let him start over again.

Often, even for Carol, this was a slow process. This morning it seemed interminable. She tried to pin her mind on the "Little Wonder Shaving Mirror," but she seemed to see, as if in that very contrivance, the face of Berwick Harkins, with the Demon Rum leering over his shoulder. Business followed its routine course. There were proofs from a printer; an artist with sketches for a booklet cover; half an hour's dictation of letters by Mr. Parker, who tore the time unwillingly from his thoughts for and about shavers. Joseph's freckled grin

was an obnoxious fixture. The postman added to the letters, variously addressed to Berwick Harkins, that had been accumulating for two weeks in that gentleman's private office, a cubby-hole adjoining his partner's.

It was Miss Brook's duty to put his desk in order. Usually she had enjoyed the responsibility; but this morning it became a gloomy ceremony like picking the last rose of summer on the last day of vacation. She felt more and more certain that it was her last week in the office. Mr. Harkins would never have written that post card when he was himself; and men who do things when they are not themselves, thought Carol, often do not remember what they have

done when they are themselves again. Very likely what Mr. Harkins had done would be a BLANK! But he *had* done it.

Carol, dissatisfied with Joseph's idea of domesticity, dusted the top of Mr. Harkins' desk, squared the blue blotter, set out the penholder, rubber stamps, ink-well, and mucilage bottle. As on Mr. Parker's desk, there was a nice girl smiling from a small gilt frame among these practical belongings. For that girl Carol was awfully sorry; it would be a terrible hour for her when she discovered that Berwick Harkins was in the grip of the Demon! The thought made Carol's heart an even heavier thing to carry round in her bosom, but she kept on methodically arranging the correspondence in a neat pile, and ended by placing the revolving chair at right angles with the desk. Carol had been brought up in New England. She liked to see furniture at right angles.

"Good morning, Miss Brook," said somebody cheerfully.

Carol jumped, almost as if she had been caught robbing her employer's desk, instead of tidying it.

"G-good morning," she replied, without looking round. Her hand shook on the back of the revolving chair. She couldn't have looked round if her life had depended on it.

Berwick Harkins hung up his tweed overcoat on a peg in the corner, and added his soft, gray hat. He belonged to a modern style of business architecture, being tall, and thin, and taking up comparatively little standing room. Without seeing him, Carol knew that his hair, a reddish shock, looked as if he had forgotten to comb it, which was the more surprising because otherwise he might have stepped out of the proverbial bandbox.

"How's everything?" he continued pleasantly. "I see that you got my post card."

Not a shade of self-consciousness! He remembered writing a post card, and that proved to Carol that she had been perfectly right; what he had actually done was a BLANK! If she remained silent—and how could she say

anything?—life would go on in the office just as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. But behind that seemingly placid curtain, Berwick Harkins would be steadily going from bad to worse! And worse!! And worse!!! Probably association with a magnificent intellect like Mr. Parker's had quickened Carol's imagination. In a series of flashes, she saw Berwick Harkins deteriorating, the business going to ball-whack, Mr. Parker driven to secure a new partner, and Mr. Harkins finally landed on a park bench, with holes in his shoes, and his hands in his empty pockets. That was what the Demon did to you if you gave him anything like a good working opportunity. Carol knew it from everything she had heard or read on the subject. And nothing but a GREAT SHOCK could save his otherwise unsuspecting victim—something that would make Berwick Harkins sit up and see his danger.

"I got your wicked post card," said Miss Brook suddenly, almost like a fire-cracker.

Berwick Harkins stared.

"My *what*?" he echoed, and then, seeing that the situation was serious: "I wrote in a hurry, but haste doesn't usually make me wicked, Miss Brook. What was the wickedness?"

Carol held on to the revolving chair and looked squarely at her employer. Her brown eyes were very round, but she felt painfully excited and self-possessed. Now that she had determined to save Mr. Harkins, what else might happen made little difference. Of course, she would have to give up her position. But there were other positions. Mr. Harkins, if he lost his soul, couldn't get another. Neither could that nice girl on the desk get another, if she lost her Mr. Harkins.

"I suppose I should say nothing about it," Carol said steadily. "But I know you wouldn't have done such a thing if you had been yourself, Mr. Harkins. No gentleman would. To insult a woman, on a post card, that anybody could read—"

Berwick Harkins rumbled his hair, a characteristic gesture which explained

why it always looked as if he had forgotten to comb it.

"If you will kindly tell me what you are talking about," he said lucidly, "perhaps I shall begin to have a remote idea, and can gradually work up to an understanding. What did I say on that post card?"

"You—you called me 'dear.' It is difficult for any nice girl to tell a man that he has called her "dear" in a moment of alcoholic irresponsibility; but Carol had settled it with herself that he should know the full enormity of his offense, and New England upheld her.

"I did nothing of the sort," said Harkins. "And what in Sam Hill do you mean by saying that I was not myself?"

"I mean," explained Carol definitely, "that you didn't know *just what you were doing*. All you remembered the next morning was that you had written—"

Mr. Harkins showed a shade of irritability. "I remembered nothing about it next morning—"

"That's just wha. I mean," insisted Carol. "When you came to yourself."

"But I had no reason to remember anything about it next morning," declared Mr. Harkins, with a visible effort to remain calm and sensible. "I wrote that post card, Miss Brook, at noon, day before yesterday, in the post office, with a colored washerwoman on one side of me, and an Italian fellow citizen making out a money order on the other. Why in Heaven's name should I remember it in the morning? Suppose you bring me that post card."

"I will," said Carol firmly.

She left him staring after her, closed the door from force of habit, returned to her own desk, and opened the drawer. The incriminating document had vanished. It had passed like the roses of yesterday; nothing was left of it; and Carol Brook had accused her employer of ungentlemanly conduct which she could not verify. Meantime he waited in his own cubby-hole for that verification—for proof, as Carol realized with a shudder, of her own

statement that he had addressed her publicly, on a post card, in terms of endearment. The Demon Rum seemed to have a decided advantage. Without that proof, with his own mind a BLANK on the subject, Berwick Harkins might well argue that she, Carol, had not been acting like herself. She looked hopelessly round the office. Somebody had taken that post card. Nobody could have taken it but Joseph. Instinct told her that he had taken it. She crossed the room to where Master Joseph, sitting on guard near the portal, was suspiciously concentrated on the morning paper.

"You give me back that post card," she breathed fiercely; "the post card you took out of my desk—"

"I ain't got yer old post card," said Joseph. "But I'll tell ye who has got it. The other boss." He jerked his grinning head toward the office of the author of booklets. "He rung fer me to bring him the pages you'd got copied, an' I slipped the card in with 'em. Right side up with care. He's probably read-in' it this minute."

There are times when life seems to be standing still, and yet going on with unusual rapidity. In the outer office of Harkins & Parker, Inc., Carol Brook stared at Master Joseph, too discouraged to be even indignant. It was the kind of discouragement that seems to sweep in everybody and everything, a universal sadness, a sense that the world is all wrong from pole to pole and around the equator, and that it was made that way by some malevolent power for its own ironic amusement. Round and round it goes with these mites of humanity pinned to the surface by force of gravity, when we should all, or at least some of us, be so much happier if we could fall off and disappear, headfirst, into infinite space. In one cubby-hole Mr. Harkins sat on his desk and frowned as he lit a cigarette. Was Miss Brook crazy, or had he gone temporarily insane himself between the colored washerwoman and the Italian fellow citizen? In the other cubby-hole, Mr. Parker, with a number of sheets of copy in front of him,



"The truth is," continued Mr. Parker, "I—well—my mind was a blank, Miss Brook. You know that's the kind of a mind I have, don't you?"

frowned critically at an island of type in an ocean of yellow paper.

With the intense gravity of a man who knows the value of humor in lightening serious discourse, he read:

Habit has accustomed us to allow one man only the privilege of pulling our noses. There is really no reason why the barber should be allowed this privilege. But the nose is a convenient handle, and any man in a barber's chair becomes a ridiculously helpless object. If a barber has any sense of humor, the temptation to pull his customer's nose is probably irresistible. The customer is flat on his back, his nose projects from the lather, thumb and finger naturally grasp the projection—

Here he removed the sheet of paper and placed it methodically on the left-hand side of his desk. On top of the sheet that had been beneath it, lay the post card. It interrupted the continuity of his thought, but he couldn't help reading it.

Back Thursday, dear. Don't forward any more mail unless you feel like writing yourself.

HARKINS.

Mr. Parker's train of thought collided disastrously with that message; a rear-end collision, for, pursuing the disrespect of barbers to the human nose, Mr. Parker ran violently into the disrespect of himself toward what he sometimes facetiously termed his "unprotected stenographer." He knew his own habits of composition. He had often enough amused the vacant half of his mind playing this silly trick with cards addressed to himself. He saw all sides of the present situation at once, exactly as a man who is about to shave might see himself in the "Little Wonder Shaving Mirror"—and if anybody had at that moment pulled his nose, Mr. Parker would have accepted the insult gratefully as a well-meant, but inadequate, punishment.

Whether Miss Brook had seen through the forgery, or accepted it as genuine, the result was equally creditable to Harkins & Parker, Inc. It introduced vulgar familiarity and horse humor into an office whose funda-

mental axiom was that employers and employed should respect each other. It insulted a very nice girl. If the very nice girl resigned, as she very likely would do, it would be difficult to find any one else equally efficient, and impossible to find any one else equally familiar with the business of the Perfect Booklet. In any case, it was up to him to apologize. And how could he apologize so that anybody but a professor of psychology would understand that he hadn't meant anything disrespectful? He got up, and then he sat down again.

The door opened, and Miss Brook herself stood on the threshold.

"Mr. Parker," she demanded, with a kind of calm desperation, "did you happen to notice—among those sheets of copy—"

Mr. Parker blushed. He tried not to, but a pink flush, something like the rosy coming of the dawn, spread over his round countenance.

"I did," he admitted. "Miss Brook, I—I wasn't quite myself when I completed that post card."

Miss Brook's mouth opened, but no sound came out of it.

"The truth is," continued Mr. Parker. "I—well—my mind was a blank, Miss Brook. You know that's the kind of a mind I have, don't you? You see, I didn't really know what I was doing. And when I came to myself—"

He wished that Miss Brook would either close her mouth, or say something. It made him feel, he told himself irritably, like a dentist. When a man is trying to apologize, the least a girl can do is not to gape at him, as if he were a lunatic.

"You see," he explained further, "in the first place, I was so concentrated on this booklet that I didn't know what else I was doing. And when I stopped doing it, I didn't realize what I had done. Of course, you understand that if I had known what I was doing, I wouldn't have done it, and that if I had known that I had done it, I

wouldn't— So, you see how it is, don't you? It's really ridiculously simple when you get at it."

Miss Brook closed her mouth slowly.

"I suppose it is," she admitted, but without seeming very sure of it. "I thought Mr. Harkins had written that—that post card. And now you say you wrote it. And I know it came through the mail, and is in Mr. Harkins' handwriting."

"We both wrote it," explained Mr. Parker. "I picked it up by mistake with my mail, and then, when I struck a snag in the booklet—well, you know how I scribble on the side when I'm trying to negotiate a snag. I forged Harkins' handwriting, and completed his letter for him, but, upon my word, I hadn't anybody whatever in view as the person who was going to read it. Afterward I saw it, address side up, and told Joseph to take it out and put it on your desk. There's the whole story, Miss Brook," concluded Mr. Parker, who had by now stopped blushing, and was making himself legible. "I'm confoundedly sorry it happened, but it *has* happened. And if you'll accept my apology—"

"Joseph thinks——" said Miss Brook.

"I'll take the crimp out of what Joseph thinks," promised Mr. Parker grimly.

"It isn't Joseph," said Miss Brook, round-eyed again, and looking, for a small girl, enormously solemn. "You see, I—the only way I could account for Mr. Harkins doing such a thing was to imagine he—had—been—drinking. And I wanted to shock him so he'd see the danger of it. And he's out in his office now, waiting to see the post card, and wondering why I don't bring it—"

This time Mr. Parker got up in earnest. "I'll take it myself," he said briskly. "I'm the repentant forger. But we're both on the water wagon, Miss Brook. Probably you didn't know it, but Harkins and I agreed when we started that you can't float the Perfect Booklet on alcohol."

ACROSS the SEA

BY

FRANCES E. GALE

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE A. HETTRICK



A STORY OF SAINT VALENTINE, BY WHOSE AID THE ARM OF A LITTLE CHILD WAS
ENABLED TO STRETCH ACROSS THE SEA

DURANT stood a moment at the Carlton entrance, looking through the glass at the sleet driven slantingly by the east wind; then he dashed into the turmoil of morning traffic that filled the Haymarket, and across the street to the office of the American Express Company. He glanced at the last page of the visitors' register, noting that few names of traveling Americans had been recently inscribed, and passed on to the reading room, with its screened-off post-office department beyond.

"No letters for you, sir," the clerk at the window said, after investigation, and Durant found a writing table, and drew paper and pen toward him.

He had been delayed in Liverpool several days, and mail from America might have reached London prior to his arrival there. Apparently it had not done so. He wrote rapidly a short business communication, then leaned back, his brows drawn together. To the only person in his home who had asked where he was going, he had replied, smiling: "You can send your letters to the American Express Company in London. They will be forwarded to me." Alicia had evinced no interest in his proposed movements. If she wrote at all, it would probably be to the hotel at which he usually put up. He had come to the Carlton with the deliberate thought that he preferred his whereabouts to be unknown to her.

The place was almost deserted. Two men stood by the newspaper racks, glancing over and commenting upon the ten-day-old New York papers, their keen, clean-shaven faces and crisp speech denoting their nationality. Presently, with good-natured anathemas upon the climate, they pulled up their collars and went out, leaving Durant the only occupant of the room. Fog hung heavily about the corners, and the rush of raw air as the door opened and closed seemed to carry a message of despondency that crept to Durant's nerves as its bearer struck to his marrow.

Success beyond that of the average man, position, health, were his. Thirty-five years lay behind him; in the course of nature the same number lay before. But the years gone by had been filled with the hope and struggle of youth up to the point where he had believed that happiness was really to be his. How short had been the time after reaching that point before he discovered that his happiness had been in the seeking, not in the attainment of his desires! Thirty-five years more to be lived. What was to fill them? Work? Ambition? Yes, but a man needs more than these things to fill out a life—a man of Durant's sort, at least, to whom sympathy and the close pressure of human companionship were as necessary as the food he ate. It was that very quality in him that made him successful, that



Then he raised his head and looked straight into the eyes of the woman he was go-

drew others to him, that gained men's confidence, and that of women, too, for he could render sympathy as readily as absorb it.

And to think that he had made this most horrible blunder eight years ago; that with two women before him, either of whom—there was no fatuous conceit in his late recognition of the fact—he might have had for his life companion, he had chosen the one whose face in youth had been fairest, but whose comprehension of his needs was as small as was her desire to supply them. Five years of a slow, chilling process, a soul in cold storage—he smiled grimly at the mental simile—then three of frank contempt and dislike on the one side, of hot resentment or bitter indifference on the other. And, for the last three of those years, the pull of the old friend-

ship which, too late, had been recognized for what it should have been in the beginning.

Durant sat making idle marks upon the blotter before him. His mind had crossed the Channel, urging his body to follow. Paris. She was spending the winter there. Her letter had plainly intimated that she would go no farther south until she had learned what his movements might be. He had written her that he would cross the ocean in March. Now, two weeks earlier, he was here. Business had afforded sufficient excuse. Alicia's last impossible attitude regarding their home life afforded more than ample incentive. Supposing that Alicia, thankful to be rid of the grind of their mutual fetters, put aside her pride, made a fuss, and asked the law to release her—well, such



ing to Paris to meet. "Eleanor!" "Yes," she said, as if she were answering a call.

things were happening every day. If, on the other hand, she was as indifferent in this matter as in all others concerning him, why should he not snatch out of those thirty-five years stretching their empty length before him an occasional interval of mind and heart sustenance upon the memory of which he could live during the months of starvation between? There was one reason why he should not—yes, there was one reason, but that he put resolutely away. He had not crossed the ocean to think of that.

Upon the wall opposite a great calendar hung. Mechanically, Durant copied its date upon a fresh sheet of paper—February 14th. With the flow of the ink his mind abandoned its backward vision and turned with a rush toward the prospect of near, if dearly

bought, joy. He wrote rapidly. He would be in Paris in two days. He was coming to claim of her that comradeship which is the right of kindred souls. They must talk things out together to the very end, and find some path out of the wilderness of life as it now existed for them both.

The street door opened, and a party of travelers came in, made some inquiries of the clerk in the outer room, and went out. Durant wrote on. As the door closed behind the transient visitors, a step came across the writing room, and some one sat down at the opposite side of the flat double desk. Durant did not look up. He must finish his sentence, which arranged for an hour of meeting. His bold initials at the foot of the page were sufficient signature. Then he raised his head and

looked straight into the eyes of the woman he was going to Paris to meet.

"Eleanor!"

"Yes," she said, as if she were answering a call.

"I thought you were in Paris."

"I was," she answered; "but I ran across to close my house here. I thought it might be"—she met his eyes levelly for a moment, then let her own fall until only the heavy shadow of her lashes was visible to him—"that I should not be returning to London for some time."

"But what brings you *here*?"

"You!" The flash from beneath her quickly raised and lowered lids had more fire in it than could have been struck from Alicia's soul in a lifetime. "I saw your name in the list of guests at the Carlton this morning, and, as I drove through the street, I—felt—that you were here. I never was in the place before."

"You—felt?" he said. "Do you believe in that sort of thing?"

"Don't you?"

"Yes; for I was speaking to you at the moment you—felt—my whereabouts."

"You were speaking to me?"

"Read," he answered, and handed across the table the letter he had just written.

As she read, her face, framed in the heavy motor veil she had thrown back, slowly paled. Durant, his eyes noting every change, wondered how he could ever have been insensible to its irregular, sensitive beauty. Without looking up, she folded the letter carefully, laid it on the desk before her, and clasped her gloved hands upon it.

"Well?" Durant asked, after the clock had ticked a minute away in the stillness.

"It is strange," she said, choosing her words carefully, "how one knows up to a certain moment just what one desires and intends to do, and at that moment something seems to rise from nowhere and fog one's intention, or is it one's desire?"

The quick understanding that was the foundation of the bond between them

sprang into Durant's face, but it blurred with less abstract emotion as their eyes met and held.

"The time for consideration is past, Eleanor," he said. "During every hour of the voyage across, I have threshed out, waking or sleeping, the possibility or impossibility of going on as I have been doing. Some men might. I cannot. If you knew——" He paused, and she interposed, her color rising:

"I know. I am Alicia's cousin. I knew her all along."

"There is no going back," he went on. "The tie would have been broken years ago were it not for——" Then, flinging back his broad shoulders, as if shaking off an invisible touch, he rose, and drew a chair to the side of the table, facing and close to his companion. The man at the desk in the outer room looked through curiously, but their low voices were inaudible to him.

"Eleanor, are you going back to Paris to-night?"

"Yes," she answered.

"To-morrow I will follow. You are at the old address?"

"Yes," she said again, breathing quickly.

"I will be there at seven, as I wrote. We must talk this all out. I must show you that unless I am to go utterly to perdition there must be some corner of the world in which I can find a heart as well as a house. We must rectify the mistake we made in the past, even though it be by covering it with fresh errors. If I must die," he smiled bitterly, "I would rather it were by fire than by frost, and I am dying now of cold and starvation. Eleanor, you will not deny me shelter and food?"

The consciousness of prying eyes made it impossible for him to touch her hand, but his glance enveloped and compelled her. She drew her veil forward, partially concealing her face, hiding from all but him the answer in her eyes.

"Mr. Durant." The mail clerk's face appeared at the window of the post-office department. "Excuse me, sir, but there is a letter for you. It came in the last mail."



"Good-by," she said; "and bon voyage!"

Durant, like a dreamer half aroused, rose and went to the window. "It's meant for you, isn't it?" the man said, smiling.

Durant took the large, square envelope. It was addressed in painfully scrawled characters to:

Mister philip Durant,
The american express Company,
London, england.

He stood, turning it over in his hands, opened his coat, and put it in an inside pocket, then withdrew it and tore open the tightly gummed flap. There slipped into his hand a gay little concoction of paper lace and gaudy colors. Surrounded by a wreath of roses and forget-me-nots was the four-inch-long figure of a saucy-faced little girl in cozy cap and furs. Her hands were thrust within the ends of a disproportionately large white muff, which hung, flapwise, from waist to knee. Mechanically, Durant raised the mimic fur, disclosing, clasped in the tiny paper hands, a bright red heart, around which was printed in fine type the words: "I'm keeping it warm for you." Upon the back of the card was waveringly penciled: "From Betty."

Durant drew a long breath, and leaned against the post-office screen. The great calendar was again confronting him. February 14th. St. Valentine's Day. The blood surged up into his face. The echo of his own words was in his ears: "I am dying of cold

and starvation." His eyes fell upon the smiling little paper face, the glowing little heart. "I'm keeping it warm for you."

He stood there so long that the woman at the desk turned her head, and he went forward and stood beside her once more.

"What is it?" she asked.

He did not answer directly, but after a moment said:

"You never had a child."

"No," she answered. "Had my short experience of marriage left me even that I would not be here to-day."

Durant laid the valentine on the table before her, and with his finger lifted again the little flap. The woman looked, read, and was silent. Her understanding of his nature was perfect. When she spoke it was to say:

"You will return. There is warmth there, after all."

His tense face showed the struggle within, but his eyes, as they met hers, were far away, and his hand drew jealously back the flimsy little love token.

Eleanor rose, drawing her wraps about her.

"Good-by," she said; "and *bon voyage*!"

He detained her, adjusting her furs more closely with gentle, lingering hands, but with eyes still distant. "You will be cold," he said.

"Yes," she answered, shivering, though her lips smiled bravely, and she went out into the snow.



He Didn't Forget

THE following story about one of their former presidents, Doctor McCosh, is a favorite among the Princeton alumni.

He hurried into chapel one morning, and plunged through the service without pausing for the usual notices. Suddenly, in the midst of his prayer, the audience was electrified by this singular petition:

"And, oh, Lord, let us not forget to announce that Professor White's class will meet at ten o'clock this morning, instead of at nine, as usual."



Mrs. Bierhauser Obeys By Virginia Kline

Author of "The Little Manager," "The Man Who Would Be Obeyed," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. GUENTHER BREUL

YOU are a very foolish old woman, *nicht wahr, Mutter?*" chaffed Mrs. Bierhauser's only son, as he handed her an antiquated alligator wallet and his family-size umbrella, the full name carved conspicuously on the handle in large, bold type. Then he adjusted the little bonnet, which had an incurable habit of getting sadly askew.

"*Ja wohl*, not more foolisher dan mine Ludwig!" retorted his mother briskly.

"Remember," he warned, "you go to the bank and draw the money to buy the paint—and you don't stop on the way to watch the crowds, or hunt for bargains, or pick up strays. We've got the place stuffed now with bargains you never use, and our back yard is full of our neighbors' lame animals. No more—remember!"

"*Ach Gott*, Ludwig, how you talk!" denied Mrs. Bierhauser. "I be not crumblung mit age. I knows vat I do. I've drawn oud money from de banks before you vas born, unt painted dis house twicet myself."

"Well, I'll take you to the car, anyhow, and stake you to a car ticket," announced the young German-American, taking his mother's plump arm, and hurrying her to the corner, where they waited for the through car to the city.

They dwelt in the suburbs, these two, a middle-aged German widow, with a nature as generous and roomy as her house, her hospitality, and her vision of heaven, and this only son who ran the vegetable farm, the dairy, half the neighborhood, his mother, and himself, to the advantage of all. Mrs. Bier-

hauser had just cause to be proud of Ludwig, and she told the whole world about it. She loved his tyrannical bossing, and submitted with outward protest, but inward grace. For was he not the image and likeness, in tastes, temper, and tenderness, of his stalwart father, who had died so many years ago?

She nodded a cheery last nod as the car started, determined to carry her mission through successfully, and return on the dot, according to Ludwig's instructions. Armed with fine resolutions, she made straight for the Commercial National Bank, where their hard-earned savings steadily accumulated, and drew out five fresh five-dollar bills to be converted into one fresh, green coat of paint.

Her errand accomplished, she went forth to meet the manifold allurements of the busy, bustling center of the city. Resolve weakened. Her sociable soul persisted in tempting her memory with the mended spectacles waiting at the genial optician's around the opposite corner of the "square."

"I cannot see very vell dis morning. I grow old. My sight be failing," she persuaded herself mournfully, cutting across for a fine gossip with her lifelong friend.

From there, ruthlessly casting Ludwig's orders aside, she feasted her spirit with gazing into the astounding shop windows full of unhuman, but wholly fascinating, styles.

She invited herself to an early and entirely unnecessary luncheon at an expensive and fashionable tea room, reck-

lessly squandering part of the money she had brought with her; taking delighted peeps, however, every once in a while, to see that the "green paint" was still there—safe, neat, and snug.

Finally, she ambled along—her faded black best sweeping the dust unheeded an inch in the back—drinking in the tingling air, and thinking sentimental thoughts to the squeaky accompaniment of a street version of "Farewell, Eleanor."

She waited impatiently for the belated hour car, her conscience pricking fearfully when she considered the overburdened Ludwig, making ready for the county fair—besides bargaining thriftily with painters for the best green-coat job at the least money. Mrs. Bierhauser knew perfectly well she was sorely needed to clinch the deal with a wheedling word or two in her inimitable broken English.

She saw the car some distance off, and would have gone along to meet it, with the shrewd intention of making sure of a seat, had not that sound of all others that never failed to draw and hold her attention jangled stridently on her ears.

An accident! In no time an ambulance was on the spot. To its clanging alarm was due Mrs. Bierhauser's fatal pausing—Mrs. Bierhauser, first aid in all the neighborhood catastrophes to grown-ups, children, animals alike: An opportunity to serve the suffering was food and drink to her insatiable sympathies.

She now peered over her silver-rimmed spectacles, through the curious, useless crowd, until she glimpsed an automobile, a gesticulating chauffeur, and an ambulance surgeon carefully lifting a child from the ground. Mrs. Bierhauser gasped. She burned to be of some help. She had just put one foot out to plunge across the street, when something white flashed before her eyes with lightning swiftness, and she stumbled ignominiously into the middle of Ludwig's cherished umbrella, whose ribs were crushed every which way as they spread to receive her weighty form.

Mrs. Bierhauser did not hear the coarse laughter from the hangers around the benches in the square, for her unbonneted head was spinning. Before she could collect her scattered wits, she was rescued by a kindly gentleman, who inquired solicitously whether she had been hurt. The crowd, pushing and elbowing around her, was so dense that he had some difficulty in piloting her to a safe spot on the sidewalk.

"*Nein*, I tinks I'm a'right. I shtumpled. Dank you," she responded, when she could get a breath, speaking more brokenly than ever.

The kindly gentleman picked up her trampled bonnet and Ludwig's crazy-looking umbrella; and it was then his mother discovered what sorry mishap had befallen her.

"*Ach, mein Gott in Himmel!* Mine Ludwig's fader's alligator pogetbook mit dem geld für das coat of paint vas gone! *Ach—Ach—*"

After a brief question or so, the kindly person summoned a policeman, who, with two others, was holding a heated discussion a few rods off.

The three symbols of law and order made their way to Mrs. Bierhauser, red with humiliation, and faint from the vision of Ludwig's countenance when he should hear.

The bulky giant in the center was spokesman. "Well, my good woman, what's the trouble?" he demanded patronizingly.

Mrs. Bierhauser, who despised the genus policeman, snapped out her experience. "Unt," she finished scornfully, "I be not your gut voman!"

"There've been three similar cases this week. Your name and address?"

"Did you ketch de oders?" was the curt inquiry.

"Not yet."

"Vell—den you don't ketch dis von. He's on his way to Galifornia in an automobile fhile you shtandt here!"

"Can you give us a clew?" pursued the officer imperturbably, winking blandly at an amused nursemaid over the old lady's head.

"Glue? Vat for a glue?" A sudden gleam shone through the silver-rimmed

spectacles. "Ja—I have a glue. I remember me, before I was falling into mine Ludwig's umprella, I see somethings vite—a hand—mit long, vite fingers—und a ring mit a plue shtone!" She nodded her head emphatically as that momentary impression came distinctly back to her.

The giant bluecoat took the data. "Now, my good woman, give me your name—"

"Nein! Nein!" refused Mrs. Bierhauser testily. "You ketch de oders." She turned her back on their frank enjoyment of her disgust, thanked her rescuer, and started off, still clinging loyally to Ludwig's battered umbrella. "I keep me de horn handle," she thought, "unt haf fresh insides unt a fine, new silk cover for him."

She had missed her car, and had an interminable hour ahead of her. She was bereft of her money, the bank would be closed, and she felt quivery and ready to cry. An idea struck her. She would go to that prince of bachelors, Horace Canfield—the silent partner in the Interborough Provision Company—and borrow what she needed.

Horace Canfield's beautiful home was at the farther end of her street. He was the wealthiest and most looked-up-to citizen in her community, but when nurses, doctors, prayers had failed, who had brought his mother safely through a critical illness but this old-fashioned, broad-faced German angel, with her old-fashioned remedies, and her never-failing instinct for healing?

Oh, yes, Mrs. Bierhauser felt sure the loan would be gladly proffered. What good fortune, too, that her shaken limbs would have only to cross the square and walk one block!

She reached the enormous building, and wound her way in and out through the buzzing, cheerful shoppers to the elevator. It happened to be situated next to the bakery department. Mrs. Bierhauser was about to press the "going-up" button when her mouth fell open in astonishment. Her near-sighted eyes fairly bulged over the spectacle rims as they fixed incredulously—upon the marauding hand!

"I be dreaming," she mumbled in her bewilderment, "or I be crazy." For—unless it was some tricky optical illusion—resting on the buyer's side of the counter, lay the long-fingered, white hand adorned with the blue-jeweled ring Mrs. Bierhauser had caught sight of on her flying trip into the umbrella.

Mrs. Bierhauser cast a glance upward along the brown silken sleeve to a slender column of neck, and then on to the hollow-eyed profile of an emaciated, but really beautiful, face.

"Ach, Himmel! A young woman—sick—ach—"

The same imperious call to her nature, and Mrs. Bierhauser was at the girl's side. She pointed to the alligator wallet lying carelessly and within easy reach on the counter, had she chosen to seize it.

"Vy did you done it?" she inquired, with tender curiosity.

The girl started, and would have fallen had not Mrs. Bierhauser's muscular arm upheld her. The bluish lips formed one faint word: "Hungry."

Mrs. Bierhauser melted with pity. She had never known anything but three substantial meals a day, and certainly, if things went on as prosperously as they had of late, Ludwig would be far from counting the cost of bread. The very thought smote his mother like a blow. She still supported the girl with her strength, yearning to know more, but compelled by her conscience to one further question: "If you vants pread—vy don't you gif dat for him?"

The girl gazed down at the magnificent sapphire whose lambent depths shone like some turbulent, imprisoned sea of glorious blue. A searing pain shot across the worn features. "It is not mine—to sell."

Mrs. Bierhauser, being, as Ludwig so often accused her, only a very foolish old woman, patted the girl's cheek and whispered: "Nefer mind, nefer mind, *liebbling!*"

The girl's eyes overflowed as she tremblingly returned the wallet. "Forgive me," she pleaded, just as a clerk came along with a bag of buns.

She was about to refuse it when Mrs.



*She peered over her silver-rimmed spectacles, through the curious, use-
and an ambulance surgeon carefully lifting a child from the*



less crowd, until she glimpsed an automobile, a gesticulating chauffeur, ground. Mrs. Bierhauser gasped. She turned to be of some help.

Bierhauser paid the clerk with change out of her recovered property. Drawing out the five crisp bank notes at the same time, she slipped them into the slender, resisting hand.

In a corner of the old lady's mind was tucked this loophole for escape when Ludwig's indignant reproof should fall upon her. "He say—no foolish bargains, no shtray cats—he say *gar nichts von einem shtarfing mädchen!*" Thus did she argue herself into righteousness. She could not have told why she felt impelled to believe and trust this forlorn little stranger, but believe and trust she did, and that was sufficient to complete her day's folly.

The overwrought nerves of the girl were too much for her, the reaction from unlooked-for kindness too great. Tears still flowed as she tried to force the money back into the wallet.

"Oh, I can't take it—I can't! I'll take the buns—but that's all. Please try to understand! I am not a thief. I was dropping for food, and I had a few moments of insanity. But I meant to take only enough to carry me two or three days. See"—she dived into the wallet and extracted a note—"I have sent for a messenger."

Mrs. Bierhauser painfully deciphered the unsigned screed:

DEAR MADAM: I am returning your pocket-book as quickly as possible. Also your rings and the five bank notes. I have kept five dollars in change, which I have reason to believe I can soon repay. I am a worker out of work. Pray pardon me. I am in desperate need. And be assured that I shall always remain deeply, keenly grateful.

"But how you know my name?" inquired Mrs. Bierhauser shrewdly.

"On the umbrella handle. I was standing near you in the crowd. I read the name first. That gave me the idea to take your wallet, and return it immediately," she explained eagerly.

Mrs. Bierhauser took out a small package in the pocketbook, wrapped carefully in cotton and tissue. "Mine vidding ring—unt mine Ludwig's fader's diamont guff buttons. *Ach, Himmel*, if dey nefer vas come back to me!" Her old eyes dimmed. "Mine

Ludwig, he say it not de shtyle to prints all de name on umprella handles, but I haf it plain unt fine on Ludwig's, unt—you see!" she cried triumphantly.

A blue-coated messenger approached them. Mrs. Bierhauser promptly feed and dismissed him. Then she offered the bills again, gently insisting. "But you say—you pay me back. *Ja wohl*, dot is good. Unt I saves mine money. You be my banks. I tell mine Ludwig dot house don't need no paint dis spring anyvays."

This child-hearted woman's faith in one who had snatched her purse and ruined her perfectly good umbrella affected the girl like a balm. She seemed to have no choice but to accept in like faith. She picked up the buns, and a square, flat package, which she pushed under Mrs. Bierhauser's arm, and strode rapidly away, disregarding her benefactor's objections.

A deep, rich voice sounded pleasantly near. "Anything I can do for you, Mrs. Bierhauser?"

It was Horace Canfield himself.

Mrs. Bierhauser told her story characteristically, to the intense amusement of the man, who had exchanged many a confidence with son Ludwig in regard to the comings and goings of the neighborhood guardian.

"She shoved dis under mine arm before I could shtop her," complained Mrs. Bierhauser, tugging at the string of the flat packet.

When the stubborn knot was untied, and the paper fell away, it revealed an exquisitely painted view of an old Parisian street. Horace Canfield cast one swift, devouring glance at its peculiar beauty, and excitedly took it from her, examining it closely, critically, amazedly, as his gaze dwelt on the scrawled signature.

"This picture took a prize at the exhibition last year. It is a genuine 'Jeanne Bruot.' That girl may have been little Bruot herself."

"But yes," said Mrs. Bierhauser, laying the unsent message beside the signature.

Canfield could well appreciate its proud straightforwardness. "Jeanne

Bruot in such a pass!" he exclaimed aloud. "It doesn't sound possible! And yet—she may have had little more than honors conferred upon her—poor little thing!"

"Dot picture—vat do she mean? She is so small for so much." Mrs. Bierhauser meant the detail of the street, which was wonderfully wrought out.

Canfield hastened to explain, and Horace Canfield, silent partner in a vast, practical enterprise to provide the best food from all lands to all people

of all lands, knew a deal more about art than he would ever know about groceries, just as Mrs. Bierhauser appreciated a prize heifer at the county fair far beyond

any masterpiece ever exhibited in an art gallery.

"She vas hungry—unt sick—unt dot ring mit der plue shtone, he belongs to her shveetheart, I tink. *Ach*, she haf suffered, dot girl, she haf suffered! For vy, I vonder?"

Canfield was wondering, too, why she had come to America. And then he remembered a rumor that had reached him of a bit of Latin Quarter comment on a certain marriage which was indirectly supposed to have concerned a young artist to whom the man in the case had been at one time betrothed. Could it have been—

"She haf crawled into mine heart," Mrs. Bierhauser flatly infused into his interesting speculation.

To save his life or little Bruot's, Canfield could not restrain a laugh. He



"*Ach, if I had not looked on der ring mit der plue shtone!*" she observed, as Canfield helped her into his automobile.

had a plan quite ready, but Mrs. Bierhauser cleverly anticipated him.

"Ve find her vere she is—at de picture shtores—yes? She haf sure go der to sell de picture. Und ve pring her to Ludwig unt me till she be shtrong unt vell, *nicht wahr?* Unt you keeps de picture. I got plenty pictures to lome!"

The lurid chromos and unframed hideosities on her walls suggested meanings and delights to her, he felt sure, never to be gleaned from the marvelously subtle treatment of grays and blacks in this dim bit of moonlit Paris.

Horace Canfield responded to her unconscious generosity with a smiling appreciation that his debt would be practically, and, tastes considered, honestly met.

"Yes—I'll be only too delighted to accept this—if you'll let me paint your house."

"*Nein! Nein!* Dot green paint, he cost too much. *Nein!*" refused Mrs. Bierhauser.

"*Ja! Ja!*" laughed Canfield. "These few inches of black and gray ought to supply you with enough green paint for the rest of your life. But since I know you won't listen to reason in that, I shall pay your young thief the just balance instead," he bribed.

"*Aber ja—den I do it,*" capitulated the old lady. "Unt now shall ve telephone mine Ludwig?"

"Yes, indeed, for I intend to take you right along with me on the search. I wouldn't let you miss it for the world."

Mrs. Bierhauser's face beamed, the joy of the mission full upon her.

"*Ach, if I had not looked on der ring mit der plue shtone!*" she observed, as Canfield helped her into his automobile, waiting outside the Interborough Provision Company.

"You've rescued ten very valuable finger tips, believe me, my friend," he declared, tucking her in.

"Ve haf made von big bargain, *nicht wahr?*" chuckled Mrs. Bierhauser, as they whizzed away to the picture dealers.

At last, after a good two hours' search, a dealer had the desired information. "Her address is twelve West Huntington," he stated. "One of our agents has just ordered a picture. She's no doubt at it now, for we have to rush it."

"She haf sure been waiting for dot order!" Mrs. Bierhauser shook her head over the perversity of circumstances, glad to be marketing butter, eggs, and vegetables herself.

They were at the dingy entrance of 12 West Huntington before Mrs. Bierhauser's pulses had a chance to slow down.

"Vot say me mine Ludwig?" she asked Canfield, laughing, but a bit uneasy.

"I'll fix it with Ludwig. Don't you worry," assured her partner in the quixotic enterprise. "Besides, Ludwig has a heart like his mother's!"

"Unt eyes like his fader's," chuckled Mrs. Bierhauser, "unt dot little painter—she is *wunderschön!*"

With which unexpected stroke of insight, the neighborhood angel pressed the shrilling bell and awaited the opened door with joyful anticipation of the light that would chase the shadows from a tragic face—and all through her eager, homely ministrations. She had disobeyed son Ludwig shamelessly, but she had obeyed herself, as usual, and hadn't a single compunction. She was gloriously at peace with her wasted time, perfectly satisfied with what the day had brought forth.

The door opened and they went in.



The Country Store

By Eugene Wood

Author of "Back Home," "Folks Back Home," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

PART I.

MANY, many years ago— But it really wasn't "many, many years ago"; it just seems that way because such a lot of things have happened between now and when I first remember being in a country store. I suppose that there are those who think that a person who can recollect 'way, 'way back to when there weren't any trolley cars at all must wear a long white beard and walk with a cane. And the man who saw this what-you-may-call-it— Mm! What's its name? You know what I mean. A steel cylinder about as big as a tomato can, with a thread cut in its surface, and covered with a jacket of tinfoil. It has a mouthpiece with a diaphragm and a pin sticker on the diaphragm. You talk into the mouthpiece while you turn the handle, and then you unwind it, and turn the handle again, and your own words come back to you in a thin squawk. The phonograph! Oh, sure! I suppose there are those who think that a person who remembers when that came out must also remember hearing the newsboys call: "Wuxty, wuxto! All about the Battle of Lexington! Embattled farmers fire the shot!"

Yet it must have been a long, long while ago, although it does not seem so. The world must have been very young then, so young that a person could just get his nose over the molding at the bottom of the show case in the country store, and when the man opened the hinged mirror door at the back, a person felt kind o' dizzyed and sickish as if he were fainting and falling backward.

The world must have been very young, for the moving-picture film of memory has so many "outs" in it, and evidently the camera that took the pictures was set close to the ground. Indeed, there seem to be more "outs" than film. There is a scene of being scared of pa because he had a false face on; scared though a person knew it was pa all the time, a nice, delicious sort of scare. And then the machine only whizzes, and there are no pictures until Johnny Pemberton has a reely cannon in his back yard. He fills it full of reely powder that he got out of the cow horn his pa goes hunting with. He puts his thumb over the front end and touches the punk stick to the little hole in the back end of the cannon, and there is a big, big noise, and Johnny begins to cry, and we all run, scared with a scare that is not at all delicious. The camera that took these moving pictures of memory is near the ground, for one of its views is of a horse that stepped over a person when he fell down in the street, lofty as a cathedral. All these were taken at about the same time as the one that had to do with going on an "urnt" to the country store, and hurry right back, and be sure not lose the change.

Now "change," as every schoolboy knows, is what you buy candy with, and chewing wax. The candy is in sticks and striped like in front of where you get your hair shingled. It dwells high, high up on the shelf near the line of perpetual snow. The chewing wax is "coal-oil wax," white and kind

of greasy without being really greasy, a good deal like paraffin that they put on top of jelly nowadays. Physically, "change" consists of big copper cents, and two centses, nearly as big, and silver three centses of the breadth and thinness of a fish scale. So when the man gave back some dirty, ragged pieces of paper with horrid pictures on them, and said that they were "change," and said it with the smarty smile that big folks wear when they are putting up a job on a little, innocent, trusting child, the very first gutter the little, innocent, trusting child came to, he promptly chucked the dirty paper into, not wishing to be made a fool of. But listen! Only a little while afterward—as soon, in fact, as he could saunter home, and then come tearing back to look for it in the gutter—it was gone!

No. It wasn't as bad as you might think. Those weren't dollar bills. There was a period in history when fractional currency was not nickels and dimes, and quarters, and halves, and that swindler's device, the twenty-cent piece—nor bits of metal, but paper, smaller than a dollar, about the size of a ticket to the Sunday-school picnic.

There was one denomination that, even when it was new, was shocking to the moral sense. You remember the picture of the drunkard in the Band-of-Hope papers, don't you? Kind of a long, swelled nose, and an expression about the mouth as who should say: "That last egg was not quite fresh." On this piece of "change" there was the engraved likeness of just such a looking man, only he was supposed to be a statesman instead of a regular hopeless drunkard. Take such a bill and get it as "grin-dy" as possible, torn, and stuck together with mending tissue, and let some comical fellow redden the nose with red ink, and draw an old plug hat on it with black ink, and put on a pipe and curling smoke with a purple indelible pencil, and who can blame a little, innocent, trusting child for flinging a thing like that into the gutter?

The world is always young when

people throw their money away foolishly.

We have the feeling that the world began when we began to take our snapshots of it; we have the feeling that it will end when for the last time the shutters close upon the lenses that take the pictures for memory's moving-picture show. We know better. We know the world was here before us, and will be after us, but *just the same we don't believe it.*

In that sense the world was young when first I met the country store, or rather, the store in a country town. But in another sense also the world was young. The Millerites were as nearly right as any prophet reasonably should be. They were only about twenty years out of the way, and that's not much of an error when all you have to go on when you cipher out the almanac date of the final wind-up is "a time, times, and a half time." All things considered, they did mighty well. The blue sky did not curl up like a scroll or a college diploma, so that one could see right into heaven, but there were "garments rolled in blood." There was no mistake about that.

The world they lived in did definitely come to an end with the Civil War.

I didn't live in that world of theirs, but when I was a little bit of a boy, I heard the old, old men talk, and tell about how it was when they were little bits of boys and heard the old, old men talk. The outstretched finger tips of retrospection reach from me—who stand so near another world that I have seen, not angels perhaps, but men flying in the air—reach from me away back to the beginning of the age that died with the War of the Rebellion, to the age wherein there was so little of the country store that to swap a cow and her calf for a bushel of coarse salt was not so bad a bargain, to an age in which a little boy, beholding a glass window for the first time, cried in amaze: "Look, mammy, look! See the house with specs on!"

Whatever be their origin in other lands, in this the towns grew up around the country store. If it is a good place



R. Emmett Owen

A person could be lifted up on one of the pivoted stools in front of the counter, to oscillate back and forth, and even whirl clear around until it made him "drunk" and he fell off.

for a bargain, then it will grow to be a place that has to have a slogan. If it isn't, it stays Johnnycake Corners, and stubs along without a motto. Far, far behind New York lags Johnnycake Corners until it is almost like one of those Western railroads where the man on the rear platform borrows a chew of tobacco from the engineer. The country store, in my faded snapshot, is a department store, not quite so big as the modern one, but as much like it as a slap is like a whipping.

On one side of the great room, very lofty and very long, was where the womenfolk bought their dry goods, a

bolt of calico at a time, wherewith to clothe not only mother, but Alfaretta and Sallie and Minerva Margaret and Vienna Jane and the baby; calico not only for dresses, but for underskirts, and even—I blush to write the word—panties. And when you get all the females of the family, and such males as cannot defend themselves by reason of their tender years, every one of 'em all diked out all over in what old Mrs. Swallow used to be so fond of, "orange-blue calliker"—"Jim, I want another bolt o' that there orange-blue calliker"—I am here to state that the effect is stunning, simply stunning.

That side of the store was interesting. A person could be lifted up on one of the pivoted stools in front of the counter, to oscillate back and forth, and even whirl clear around until it made him "drunk" and he fell off. A fascinating feature were the brass tacks in the counter, to mark the yard and half yard and quarter yard. I wonder if that didn't originate the expression, "getting down to brass tacks"—concluding the bargain, and measuring off the goods. In the world that died, that point was not arrived at meekly. All afternoon the lady would struggle with the man that "waited on" her, trying to get him to come down from twenty-eight cents a yard to twenty-two; and when they got to brass tacks at twenty-six, she felt that she had won a victory worth fighting for. And so she had, unless the clerk had put up the price two cents a yard, knowing how she was that way.

It was thrilling to see him take out his little round-ended scissors and nick the goods, and then tear them across with such delightful recklessness. And there was always the glass case that held the spools of colored sewing silks which gleamed like jewels, gorgeous, lustrous hues, like light itself wound on the reels. I liked that color best called—

"Ma, what does S-O-L-F—"

"Solferino, honey."

"You didn't let me spell it all out."

"You didn't need to. I knew."

And there were cards of buttons stitched upon sheets of glorious copper tinsel that crackled to the touch. The buttons were commonplace, but eyes grew big and round dreaming of how a person could make a long, slim wand with a shining star on the tip of it like the fairy in the pitcher book, and a person could easy get the long switch—wand, I should say—and the tinsel stuff would do to make the star out of. If only ma would buy the buttons! But she wouldn't. She said she had no occasion for them. As if that were a reason!

Oh, the dry-goods side had a charm, no doubt, but it was fainter than that

of the groceries division, which was not so pleasing to the eye. But there are other senses. Whisper. Away back by the side door is the sugar barrel, sweet *per se*, but also sweet as stolen waters are. Don't let on I told you where it was.

In the dawn of history startling discoveries are made. Some are so startling that the mind refuses to accept them and they have to be rediscovered many times. Prime among such is the discovery that there can be too much of a good thing. Even the biggest and stickiest lumps of brown sugar lose their sweetness after you eat down half a pound or so. And, oh, the regret with which one learns that sugar in large quantities does not taste sweet, but bitterish, sourish, mawkish!

The world must have been young then, at least in Johnnycake Corners, for all sugar was brown or brownish. Loaf sugar there was in marble cones, done up in thick, blue paper, and pieces to sweeten the tea were knocked off with a hammer. But there was no granulated sugar, sparkling white, chemically pure, and loose like sand.

Oh, that reminds me. Truth may be mighty, but one lie she probably will never prevail against, and that is the wicked slander that grocers adulterate sugar with sand. Not granulated sugar. There isn't white sand cheap enough. Confectioners' sugar is another matter, and, anyhow, it isn't sand they put in that. In those ancient days I won't say but what a bucket of water might have been spilled into the hogshead of moist brown, purely by accident occasionally. And also there might have been clay that got itself sold at sugar prices. But that was legitimate. Long before they knew how to clarify sugar with bullocks' blood and calcined bones, there was a hen. I don't know what her name was, but it probably was Speckle. (Don't get her mixed up with Spreckels.) One muddy day she walked with wet feet over the sugar-house floor, and where her tracks were, there the sugar was perceptibly whiter. So, if there was mud in the teacup, it got there honestly. Water in the moist



One day his father said: "Bub," said he, "time you was gettin' married."

brown, mud in the C sugar, but sand never.

In this present adult world, no longer young, white sugar is quite cheap, except at canning time, when there is an almost total, though temporary, failure of the crop. But there is no small gain without some great loss. White sugar may be plentiful, but where is now the "Golden Drip," a luscious name? Where is now the Orleans molasses that was so grand for gingerbread, that

in the world's youth fizzed and bubbled around the corncob stopper of the jug, as it and the little boy bounced in loving company in the wagon's homeward bed after a journey to the country store, a jug that boiled up sweetness, and a little boy that had a long, pink tongue?

There is still what calls itself Orleans molasses, but la! it tastes like a tar-roofing compound. "Golden Drip" that, like Jordan, overflowed his banks of homemade butter spread on home-

made bread, and made one bite quickly and discreetly, is now replaced by a gummy glucose that goes good on gridle cakes only if you sprinkle lots of sugar on it.

The dry-goods department feasted the eye, which is poor pickings if you want to know, but the grocery side was much more filling. There were crackers in the barrel, and cheese is never so good as when it is shaved off in the thinnest of thin slices by the big knife. There were raisins on branches in boxes that came all the way from Spain. It might have been a bother to have to stone them, but it was a cheerful sort of task, especially if you did it to help your dear mamma. And there were crumbs of citron. Somehow, when the world is young, it votes for sweets more willingly than savories.

There weren't so many different kinds of candy in the country store, but what there were were nicer tasting. If you didn't care to crunch them with a noise that sounded to the cruncher like all creation falling down, you could run a race to see whose stick of hoarhound would last the longest sucked to a spearpoint. Coltsfoot? Was that the name of that quaint-tasting, grayish confection that came in deeply crenelated sticks? I wish I had a piece of it this minute. "Clear toys" there were, too—hard, transparent goodies molded into hearts, and acorns, and fishes, and roosters, flavored with emphatic flavors like clove, and wintergreen, and peppermint. Was there a cinnamon flavor, too? Probably not, for that "dried up the blood." At least the pink essence that came in little bottles did. You bought that at the drug store, and upended it on your tongue. Wow! but wasn't it hot? That wasn't the real thrill, though; the thrill came from the risk of your blood drying up into a crisp.

"Liquorish root" they had in the country store, and, oh, yes! "conversation candies." These were—and are, I reckon, for the world would not let die so useful an invention—white as

the driven snow except for red-ink sentiments, incomprehensible at an age when every word has to be spelled out. They must have come in when the old world died, for if they had been extant then, Manasseh Hoover need not have been so blunt about it.

Manasseh was the baby of the family, six-foot-three, and big accordingly. He was twenty-four years old. All his brothers and sisters were married off and gone, and he lived with his paw and maw, who couldn't get over thinking he was just a child. He never, as the saying is, "went out amongst 'em," till one day his father said: "Bub," said he, "time you was gettin' married."

"Huh?"

"I said 'twas time you was gettin' married."

"Oh, all right," answered Manasseh, and began to study whom he would have. He liked the looks of Lucy Troutwine about as well as any, though he had never even spoken to her. Mind you, Manasseh didn't know how to act in company because he had never been in company. He went to singing school, and, after it was over, he marched up to Lucy.

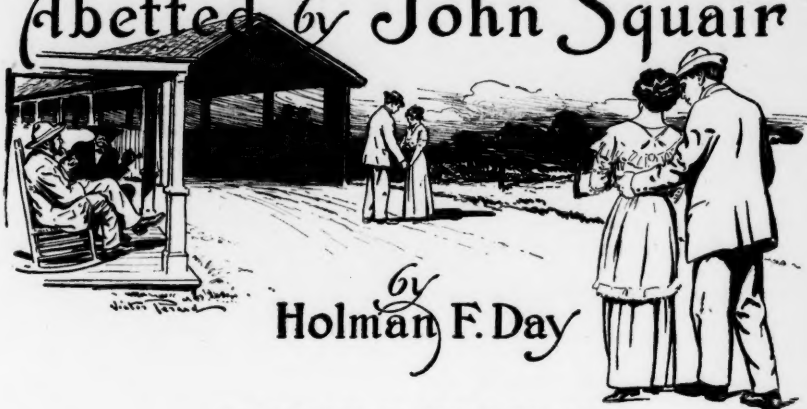
"Hay!" he said. "I'm a-goin' home with you, d'ye hear me?"

It kind o' scared her, and she took to her heels, he after her as hard as he could pelt, and bellowing: "Hay! Hold on there! Stop right whur you aire. Cuz I'm a-goin' home with you."

She got to laughing so hard she couldn't run, and he caught up with her and beaused her home. And it wasn't long after that till he was settin' up with her regular, and they got married in the spring, and lived together to be real old people, happy as birds.

Lots of fellows, though, haven't the spunk that Manasseh had. Those white, flat candies, with red-ink queries of: "May I see you home?" and, "Will you be mine?" must have helped out considerable. I'll bet there are lots of people that wouldn't be here at all only for those conversation candies.

Abetted by John Squair



by
Holman F. Day

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

EVENING after evening—those soft, misty-moisty, thrilling evenings in April—Cap'n Aaron Sproul strolled down the hill to the river and sat and smoked with the toll gatherer of Scotaze Bridge.

Cap'n Sproul had a strong liking for that loafing place, for he could hear the waters rustling below in the gloom, even as the sea had rustled in quiet harbors under the counter of the *Jefferson P. Benn*.

And he had grown to have a strong liking for John Squair—Corporal Squair he had been in the Civil War. And having been in the war, and having roved somewhat subsequently, he could hold converse with the captain on matters outside the narrow limits to which most men in the town of Scotaze confined themselves.

It was good to be out of doors on those April evenings, puffing at pipes on the porch of the little tollhouse. The twilight breeze brought fresh odors from earth stirred by spring, wood smoke flavored the air with delicate tang, sleepy doves murmured and nestled among the rafters of the old bridge, and there were but few passers after nightfall. Therefore, the mumble of yarn-spinning between the two went on without much interruption.

Once in a while couples came, youth and maid, strolling through the soft gloom from the village, and, arm in arm, passed into the shadows of the bridge. They paid no toll. The lovers of the village had a fine understanding with kindly John Squair. They could make the old bridge their Lovers' Lane, lean from its windows, and gaze on the river's silver flood, and pay nothing for the privilege, provided they did not step foot on the farther shore.

"Only help me to keep rules laid down by bridge trustees," said old John Squair. "Courtin' is free, but crossin' is two cents."

"Any particular reason for you having such a soft spot for courtiers?" inquired Cap'n Aaron, after a few weeks of intimacy with Corporal Squair had made him feel free to probe possible secrets.

"No, only feel sort of tolerant toward 'em. Courtin' is kind of a bridge, anyway. It's betwixt and between. And it's so blamed uncertain what poor critters will find on the matrimony shore that I like to encourage the young folks to stand on the bridge for a time. There ain't any doubt they enjoy the courtin' bridge—but they have to pay when they step on t'other side."

"Always been old bach?"

"Always," answered Corporal Squair. "I was one till I was high fifty and left the sea. I've always been glad since that I crossed the bridge—sorry I didn't wake up and do it before."

"I've heard that said by most men who have married late in life."

"Then I should think that even an old bach might be encouraged—say, an old bach like you."

"No," said Corporal Squair, with a smile that was very wistful.

"It ain't financial circumstances, is it?" probed the cap'n, with a mariner's bluntness of attack. "You've got your pension and your pay—and two can live and keep house about as cheap as one."

"I've got most four thousand saved by being prudent all my life," acknowledged Corporal Squair, twisting up his military mustache with a bit of pride. "It ain't finances."

"I ain't inquisitive," stated Cap'n Sproul, "so I ain't going to ask why."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," vouchsafed Corporal Squair. "That's why I ain't ever messed much with folks round here—they've got bayonets for noses, and keep rammin' 'em into a man's business."

The corporal met the cap'n's challenging side glance with such ingenuous placidity that the cap'n decided that he wouldn't take this remark as one designed to start something.

But Cap'n Sproul's zest for conversation was a bit chilled, and silence fell between the two. During the silence, a young man passed the tollhouse, shrouded by the evening shadows. He was hurrying.

"I'm only going to step out on the bridge for a few minutes, corporal," he called.

"My eyes ain't as sharp as they used to be," confessed the toll gatherer. "Who was that? Voice sounded familiar."

"Will Snell—Lycurgus' boy," stated the cap'n—for an old mariner has cat's eyes for the dark.

Five minutes later he posted the corporal again. This time a girl hurried

past, and disappeared into the tunnel of the bridge.

"That's Annie Reeves—old Bat's girl—and I've always wondered how it was such an old sculpin as Batson Reeves ever come by a daughter as good as Annie Reeves. The mother must have been an almighty good woman."

"She *was* a good woman," said Corporal Squair, in a tone the cap'n had never heard from him before.

"Must have been a tremendous good woman to have her qualities overcome all them of old Bat."

"The best woman I ever knew. It was the only case I ever knew of where I was glad when God took a good woman out of the world," murmured Corporal Squair, a catch in his voice.

The one who now came down the road from the village did not tread softly like the lovers who had passed into the poor little temple that Cupid's altar had glorified for them. He stamped along the middle of the highway, and when he came opposite the tollhouse, he was grunting words that sounded like oaths. He was plainly not a lover.

"Hold on, there—pay toll," called Corporal Squair, squinting to make out the identity of this trampling pedestrian.

"I'm not going to go clear across your devilish old bridge," snapped the passer.

"You can tell the devil by his croak and the smell of brimstone," averred the corporal. "I don't need good eyes to know that's Bat Reeves."

"There's two poor critters going to get Hail Columby for loving each other," said the cap'n.

"I reckon so. They ain't ever dared to walk along the road together. I've been hopin' he wouldn't find out they've been slyin' into the bridge."

"Too many old blab mouths in this place for 'em to keep it up long. The women have begun to talk—heard some of 'em up at my house the other day. Told my wife she ought to be ashamed to have any gossiping going on around our premises."

"You know what the trouble is with

Reeves, don't you?" The corporal was staring anxiously at the dark mouth of the bridge.

"I know he'd leave the shadiest nook in paradise and walk clear acrost the hottest back pasture in Tophet to get a chance to kick the stuffing out of a decent and honest affection between two people."

"He proposes to make that poor girl marry old Jeffrey, because their farms join, and old Jeffrey's got twelve thousand out on mortgages, and probably won't live much longer. Then Bat can handle the money."

"Yes," admitted the cap'n sourly; "that was some of the gossip they was passing out up to my house. And one of them old hens had the impudence to say that Annie Reeves would make old Jeffrey a lovely third wife—said he needed somebody kind and good to take care of him in his last days."

"Proputty—proputty — proputty — damn 'em!" cried the corporal. "They want to marry farms and get up a flirtation between a mortgage and a savings-bank account. God help Bat Reeves' girl!"

They heard then the sound of wrangling voices within the bridge. They heard the voice of Reeves, hoarse and loud in threats and oaths and epithets. Then he stamped out, thrusting a sobbing girl ahead of him.

"I'd give a quarter of what I've got saved in the bank for power of attorney right now from—from—well, I don't know where it could come from—but a man like that ain't got any right to be a father," stammered the corporal.

Cap'n Sproul, ancient and implacable foe of Batson Reeves ever since they had fought together on the board of selectmen of Scotaze, apparently did not consider that he needed any power of attorney to warrant his walking into the road in front of Reeves and his daughter. The road was common property, even if the daughter wasn't.

Cap'n Sproul squared himself so determinedly before the father and daughter that Reeves halted.

"Need any help on this job, Reeves?"

inquired the cap'n, with provocative sarcasm. "Afraid she'll turn on you?"

"I don't need any help, and I don't need any advice."

"I don't intend to waste any advice on you—you couldn't absorb it."

Another figure joined the little group in the twilight gloom. It was the young man, who came hurrying from the bridge.

"Now I've got two good witnesses, Reeves," he cried, his voice breaking in passion. "You can't call me the names you have and get away with it! Captain Sproul, you're a fair man—you listen! He says I am trying to steal his daughter—that I am a drunkard and a loafer, and want to ruin her. I love her, Captain Sproul. I'm proud to shout it out before all the world that I love her."

"You want to disgrace her some more, do you, by standing here in the road and hollering that?" growled Reeves. He pushed his daughter ahead of him. "Come along home, you! I'll teach ye to traipse."

"You'd better run along, sissy," advised the cap'n. "We may have over a few words here such as you wouldn't hear at a sewing bee. Trot along now, that's a good girl!" She understood the appeal in his tones and hurried away, sobbing. But when Reeves tried to follow, the cap'n interposed an arm as solid as a main yard.

"What are you interfering with me for? How do you belong in this?"

"Don't suppose I do," acknowledged the cap'n. "I'm trying to think up some way how I can get in. If you're too much of a coward, Reeves, to stay here and have a little man's talk, go ahead and run."

"I ain't afraid of the whole caboodle of you."

"Put up your fists, then, now that your daughter isn't in hearing," young Snell requested truculently. "You'll take back what you said about me, or spit teeth for a week."

"Hold on! Licking a father, no matter how much he needs it, ain't laid down as a rule in my copy of Love-maker's Guide," stated Cap'n Sproul.



"Well, young Snell," he grated, "which one of these buildings do you own—or are you just running for Congress?"

"If you can't control your temper, young Snell, you don't deserve a good girl."

"This ain't a subject for no joint debate," insisted Reeves. "That girl is mine, and this scalawag can't have her. Now, outside of that, what other business have you got with me?"

"I've got just a little!"

Corporal Squair had spoken. He came down from his porch, and though his tones were gentle, his chin was erect and the white mustache bristled.

"Reeves, I have had a chat or two with your girl when she has walked past here evenings, and——"

"You're running that bridge as a hide-hole where the girls of this village can meet cheap renegades, and we'll see what the directors of the company have to say about it," stormed the father.

"If parents in this town did right by their children, had some sympathy and human understanding, the poor youngsters wouldn't have to hide in a bridge, Reeves. Look here! Just a minute before you rave! I'm going to say out loud a few words I never intended to say. I reckon there's need of it."

There was something in his voice that arrested even the tongue of Reeves. The old soldier's silvery hair and his white mustache outlined his face in the gloom.

"Now that we've met here, as we have, I think it's my duty to say it. Reeves, a girl in this town was promised to me when I went away to the war. You lied about me when I was away, you forged a writing that fooled her, you got her, you was married to her when I got home. She was the mother of that daughter you just sent away with her heart breakin'. You abused that woman who ought to have been my own dear wife. Don't you talk to me! I know. I was glad when God called her home, out of your clutches. You abused her because your dirty heart kept tellin' you she was sorry she ever married you. That little girl of yours loves this boy, here. You're tryin' to make hell out of another woman's life. I ain't got any

legal right—but I've got a moral right to say you shan't do it."

"You go to the devil—the whole of you!" snarled Reeves. He tried to tramp off, but the cap'n stuck out that arm again.

"Sounds to me like he had," suggested the old skipper.

"I maintain that young folks have a right to love the ones they want to love. If I can fix it so that they won't be cheated like I was cheated, I propose to do it," declared Corporal Squair doughtily.

"Do you pretend you're going to tell me how I shall marry off my own daughter?"

"I ain't goin' to stand by, twiddlin' my thumbs, and see you sell her to old Jeffrey."

"How do you reckon you're going to stop it?"

"Tell some more men the story I've just told these two—and get up a tar-and-feather bee. I ain't makin' threats—but I'll bet I could find volunteers."

"You let me out of this gang of pirates!" roared Reeves. He ducked around the cap'n's arm and made off.

"No, don't chase him," the cap'n advised the indignant youth. "We don't want him back here. I've had all his company I can stand for one dose. Young fellow, you love that girl, do you?"

"Yes, Cap'n Sproul, I do."

"You come up here and sit down on this porch between the corporal and me for a few minutes. After what the corporal has said, I must confess there's something about this case that interests me. Young Snell, do you want me to be interested in this thing?"

"I'll be mighty grateful to you, Captain Sproul, if you can help me any."

"Then, young Snell, I'm going to strip the proposition right down to bare poles. I see your father working every day in his blacksmith shop, but I don't see you there. What's your job?"

"Why, I'm—I'm sort of waiting till I can get my feet placed. I—I haven't just picked out what I want to do in life."

"Then when Reeves told you you was



*The girl leaned forward, eyes alight, lips parted. The
the casket of her pathetically poor posses-*



mother had a little rosewood box on her knees—her lit-
sions. She was reading letters aloud.

a loafer, he wasn't more'n three points off the course, hey?"

"But I'm going into something just as soon as it comes along."

"Young Snell, this waiting for a chance to come along is doldrum business. Your chance may be so long coming that you'll go to sleep and not see it when it does come—or, mebbe, when it comes it will scoot past so fast that you can't get aboard. You hustle out and chase that job or you ain't the kind of a boy who'll deserve Annie Reeves."

"It has been hard to go away and leave her—there's no knowing what her old rat of a father will do when I'm gone."

"Courting is fine—pleasant way of passing time. But in this case 'intentions is matrimony,' as the ads have it—and unless you get a job, the corporal and I can't talk up to Bat Reeves the way we want to. You have just seen that we're pretty good talkers—but we've got to have good material for a topic. Will you skip out now and get that job?"

"Yes, sir. I'll go to Boston. There's more chance for a fellow in a big city."

"There are more *other* things there, too, young Snell. Now, tell me—what did he mean by your being a drunkard?"

"I'm not a drunkard, Captain Sproul. I wanted to smash his old face for saying that."

"Do you drink?"

"Why, I—I have just skylarked around with the boys a little—like any young fellow will—and he may have seen me. A fellow has to have a good time once in a while."

"I've had Portygee sailors who thought they couldn't get along without a third helping of plum duff—but I usually managed to show 'em the error of their ways. Snell, being young is all right—having a good time whilst you're young is all right, too. If a boy doesn't lark and play a little, then something's wrong with him—he's apt to wake up and lark and play late in life and make an old fool out of himself while he's doing it. But where did you

get the idea that hooting it up with rum was having a good time?"

"Most of the fellows do."

"If you can't make a special case of yourself—and *don't*—then the corporal and I drop your case right here and now. We ain't no special bureau of reformers. We ain't qualified as temperance orators. But a youngster who thinks he can't have a good time without sopping up liquor ain't the kind of a fellow we've picked out for Annie Reeves. Am I right, Corporal Squair?"

"My sentiments to a T."

"But you can never make him let Annie marry me," mourned the youth.

"And now, right on top of your other failings, I find you lack courage, faith, and spunk. Young Snell, I wonder whether you're worth our wasting our time on you?"

"I mean right, Captain Sproul. I love her. If I don't have her for my wife, I don't want to live. I've been fooling around. I'll wake up! There ain't any opportunities in this gone-to-seed place. I'll hustle from now on. I'll show you that I'm worth while."

"That talk sounds better," admitted the cap'n.

"But can you make him let her alone—let her wait for me?"

"We're great operators—we two," stated the cap'n loftily. "And even a man like Bat Reeves can't sell off a girl like he'd sell a heifer, not when a New England neighborhood has its eye out."

"I could get up a tar bee on mighty short notice—confinin' it strictly to members of Tucker Post G. A. R.," declared the corporal.

"Now you go ahead, young Snell, and see what you can make out of yourself," directed Cap'n Sproul. "The corporal and I are putting you on probation. If you qualify in shipshape and seamanlike manner, we'll rate you A-one."

"That's right—on probation," agreed the corporal. "Commission will be ready for you when you have mastered the manual."

"I'll make good or die trying," cried young Snell.

"There ain't anything necessarily fa-

tal in a good try," admonished the cap'n. "Don't tell us what you're going to do—come back here and tell us what you've done."

After the young man had rushed away into the night, the cap'n and the corporal were silent and filled their pipes.

"Does she look any like her mother did—at her age?" asked the cap'n at last.

"Sp't'n' image," said the corporal, his eyes on the stars.

"About all I can do is this," stated the cap'n. He arose and put out his hand. Corporal Squair rose and grasped it. Then the cap'n walked home, his hands behind his back, his head bowed, the pipe smoke curling past his ears. The trillings of the frogs in the river sedges sounded the lonest he had ever heard them sound.

II.

With acerbity, with acrid irony, and profane emphasis, Cap'n Aaron Sproul, as prominent stockholder in the Coast & Gulf Transportation Co., stood beside the table in the directors' room, and told the managers of the business what he thought of them and their captains and things in general. Occasion: the passing of a dividend.

Then he gave them some pregnant advice, banging his fist on the table, and warned them of what would happen in that office unless they woke up. After that he slammed his hat on his head and went out on the city streets for fresh air. He allowed, at the door, that the gentlemen with whom he had just been associating had poisoned the atmosphere in that room.

"*There's* an old crab who never had a human feeling in his life," averred one of the directors. "A little sentiment softens things in this world. But he's got holystone for a heart and a belaying pin for a soul. However, he knows the shipping game, and we'd better follow his advice."

The cap'n stamped along the street, muttering his disgust at the kind of men who were on the sea since he had

left it. The locality was in the region of the wharves of the big city. He scowled at the loafers he met.

"And there ain't much better critters on shore," he informed himself.

Suddenly he whirled to one side, and grabbed the arm of a young man. The fellow's face was grimed, his clothes were slouchy, and the cap'n caught the fetid odor of stale liquor when he brought his nose close to the face of his captive.

"Well, young Snell," he grated, "which one of these buildings do you own—or are you just running for Congress?"

Snell struggled a moment, and then gave up, lowering his head.

"I see red coming into your face. You hain't lost all shame, even though you look as if you'd lost everything else," stormed the cap'n.

"Don't bother with me any more. I ain't fit to have you bother with me," faltered the unhappy youth.

"I'm going to bother with ye till I find out a few things. What have you been doing for these six months you've been here?"

"I tried—but I couldn't make good."

"Blast ye, tell me something I can't see for myself! Tell me why you've been writing home letters every week, saying that you were succeeding, making money, doing well?"

"I lied. I didn't want 'em to know."

My nose tells me you're making money enough so that you can buy rum!"

"I sweep out that saloon over there. I get something to eat off the lunch counter—"

"Look-a-here! I don't need any more data to figure your latitude and longitude from. No more talk. I'm ashamed to be seen here talking with you. I'll be more ashamed to have you come along with me. But you're coming." The cap'n set firmer grip of his big hand around the youth's arm, and propelled him up the street.

"Where are you taking me?"

"Back to Scotaze."

"I won't go—I can't go. I don't want to be shown to 'em."

"I ain't going to show you to 'em—but I'm going to show *you* something. You come along with me without hanging back, or I'll boot you the length of this street to the railroad station."

Snell, pitiful figure of a human wreck, without the courage to resist this authority, went along, whimpering.

It was a long and silent ride on the train. The cap'n uttered not one word. Snell marveled at this taciturnity. In his heart he feared. He could not understand what this grim sphinx intended to do. It had been plain that the cap'n had arrived at a decision the moment he had grappled his probationer—and that fact stirred all of Snell's apprehension.

Night mercifully hid them when they left the train at Scotaze. Cap'n Sproul rushed the young man into the shadows, obliged him to climb over a fence, and then boosted him along paths across the fields.

"You're taking me home—I won't go!" squealed the youth, when he was sure of the route. But in the grip of the sturdy old mariner he was compelled to step along at a lively gait. The cap'n did not vouchsafe a word of explanation. His silence had become fairly terrifying.

At the stone wall that guarded the rear of Lycurgus Snell's little cottage, the young man made a desperate stand. The cap'n scuffed up great handfuls of the shabby coat, and shook his captive furiously, and ended by tripping him and sweeping him around and around in the dirt. Then he hoisted him over the wall.

"If you make a sound now, I'll throw you over the ridgepole," he panted, in a hoarse whisper.

He dragged Snell close to a window from which lamplight's radiance painted a mellow flare on the night outside. A lilac bush, shriveled by the autumn, hid them.

"I reckoned about how it would be at this time of the evening," muttered the cap'n. "I've known about how it has been in the past—having taken an interest in this thing. Now, you low-

lived skunk—you look in there—you listen!"

There were three in the room—two old folks and a girl; the youth's father, his mother, and Annie Reeves.

The mother had a little rosewood box on her knees—her little casket of her pathetically poor possessions. She was reading letters aloud.

The girl leaned forward—eyes alight, lips parted, her fair hair seeming an aureole about her winsome face—for the lamp was beyond her, and its radiance touched her tresses.

"Look! Listen!" hissed the cap'n. "Those are your letters. She comes here night after night to listen to 'em over and over. She'd rather hear them letters than hark to the grandest poems man ever wrote. Your mother would rather read them letters than read out of her little Bible. I have been in and have set with 'em and have heard 'em read 'em. I have listened to your lies. Look! Listen! Let that sight sink in through that dirt and grime and hide of yours, Snell! Look at your father's face as he sets there, believing that he has got a decent son. Look at your poor old mother. And then—if the sight doesn't blister them bleared eyes of yours, look at that poor, motherless girl who has been waiting for you all these months—depending on you and your love and your efforts to take her out of a home that has always been a hell for her. She never had any love and tenderness in her life, till she thought she was getting it from you. I told you once, young Snell, that I couldn't qualify as an orator—but now I reckon I could if I only dared to let my voice out. By gad, I can't stand it to stay here any longer! Keep still that noise!"

He yanked the sobbing wretch away from the window, and rushed him back across the wall. He fairly galloped him down across a field into a little patch of woodland. He halted in a bit of a clearing, where the stars of the clear autumn heavens lighted their faces.

"Them tears are cleaning some of the dirt off'm your face," the cap'n snarled.



"But I don't know whether they're washing your soul any or not. I have admired some liars before now in my life. I have known lies to be worth while. But the damnation pup who would feed lies to those poor souls up yonder there is the dirtiest liar God ever let run loose."

The leash against which his self-control had fretted for so long snapped there and then. He fell upon the young man. He shuttled the cowering head between his hard palms, beating the youth's cheeks until they puffed. When Snell struggled away, staggering, the cap'n followed after him, kicking him till he fell, kicking him when he rose and stumbled about again. And

when at last the young man was beaten into helplessness, too overcome to implore mercy any longer, and writhed on the turf, blubbering and half fainting, the cap'n dragged him to a little brook and held his face down into it and scrubbed until it was clean. Then he tossed him back upon the sward.

After a long time, Snell ventured to raise his red and swollen eyes. Sobs were still catching his throat like hiccups. The cap'n was sitting with his back against a tree, his arms folded, surveying his work.

"Young Snell, I don't want to hear you yip one word. There ain't a thing you can say that will help this case a mite. I don't profess to be no expert on refurbishing human nature. But I've done the best I've knowed how on short notice. You are a hard ticket—and I've tried two ways of softening you. If that sight you saw up there through your folks' window didn't wake you up, and if what I have just done to you don't keep you awake, then you're one of them kind that's elected to tend the fires in Tophet. Stand up, young Snell!"

The youth groaned to his feet.



After a long time, Snell ventured to raise his red and swollen eyes. The cap'n was sitting with his back against a tree, his arms folded, surveying his work.

"'Bout face now, as Corporal Squair would say if he was here. Go back into the world. Keep that picture I showed you before your eyes from now on. If you can make good now, the lies you have written home won't cuss ye so bad in eternal torment. For'ard, march!"

The cap'n began to tug at his pocket when the young man turned his back and started away. He overtook the poor chap at the edge of the clearing.

"Bub, up to date you hain't paid any dividends—but I'm still figuring that you're a good investment."

He seized Snell's hand, and stuffed a fat wad of bills therein. He forcibly closed the unwilling fingers over the money. He grasped the closed fist and shook it.

"Remember, bub, I'm watching you, the old folks are praying for you—and she's waiting for you. For God's sake, now, make good!"

A certain director of the Gulf & Coast Transportation Co. might have revised his opinion of Cap'n Aaron Sproul's human feelings if he had caught sight of the old skipper's face at that moment, or if he could have overheard his muttered remarks as he trudged off home across the fields.

His way took him past the tollhouse and across the bridge, but he did not stop when Corporal Squair hailed him. He growled an excuse about a late supper waiting for him.

"But did you bump up against our probationer boy anywhere down to the city?"

"Yes, I bumped against him," answered the cap'n from the dark mouth of the bridge.

"Boostin' right along, is he, just as his letters say?"

"Yep, boosting right along. Stepping high, wide, and lively!"

The cap'n hurried on.

"Seeing that I'm depending on the corporal to keep old Reeves backed into the stall till this thing is settled, a little judicious lying is called for," pondered Cap'n Sproul on his way up the hill. "The corporal might not be so kind,

tolerant, and lenient as I've been with young Snell."

A week later Cap'n Sproul received a letter that fortified his faith considerably. It was a letter of touching penitence. The Snell boy opened his heart. He did not try to excuse or gloss his horrible failure. But after he had read it carefully, Cap'n Sproul found it in his heart to pardon some of the delinquency of a boy who had gone away ill-fitted to meet the hard world—a boy who had been homesick, heartsick, and lovesick—who had failed to understand that a girl will wait if she loves, even if a tyrannical father seeks to coerce her. It was plain that the Snell boy now had a new viewpoint. He did not boast in that letter of what he would accomplish, but the cap'n found a wistful determination between the lines.

"He'll pay dividends yet," he assured himself.

The first thing the Snell boy paid was the loan from the cap'n—though the cap'n had not really intended it for a loan. But it was encouraging to discover that the Snell boy considered it a loan.

"He *has* paid dividends," said the cap'n. "So has the Gulf & Transportation Co. this year. That cussing trip I made to the city seems to be turning out into considerable of a success."

III.

So it came around to the spring—two years after that April of pledge—and the wood smoke from the dried boughs of the winter-cellar thatches tingled in the moist air, and the frogs trilled in the sedges, and the cap'n and the corporal could sit on the porch once more after a winter of chats beside the air-tight stove in the tollhouse.

For some days, Corporal Squair had studied Cap'n Sproul from the corners of his eyes with some uncertainty. He seemed to be trying to formulate some kind of a question. At last the cap'n detected several of those strange glances.

"Luff!" he suddenly commanded.

"Luff?" repeated the corporal.

"Yes; I can see you want to come across my bows for something. Luff and come across."

"I want to know something—and I've been tryin' to frame it nice and polite."

"Needn't bother about making it polite. Name it."

"Cap'n, have you been lyin' to me?"

"If that's your polite way, I wonder what you would have said to me before you smoothed it."

"As I understood it, we went into a projick together in the Snell boy matter. I've been tied here at this tollgate all the time, and you've hunted the news for me from the Snell family."

"Correct."

"Well, a feller was along here, and said he'd seen the Snell boy loafin' in dives, drunker'n a fiddler's hoorah!"

"When did the feller say that?"

"Well, I don't just remember."

"Give a guess."

"Might have been a few weeks ago. Now, let's see—might have been a month ago. No, guess, come to think—I'm so busy and time flies so—might have been early last fall."

"You'd make a nice man to run a daily paper—with your idea of what's up-to-date news," snorted the cap'n. "Whose word be you going to take—your pardner's in the Snell boy case, or the word of some fly-by-night?"

"I'd rather take yours."

"The next time that feller comes along here, you tell him I said he's a liar, and add that if there's anything I hate it's a liar—don't care what the lying is about," valiantly prevaricated the cap'n.

"Now, that's the way to talk to a man—right out frank and open. But you have said, yourself, that the Snell boy ain't writin' home any more of them braggin' letters about how well he's doin'. So I thought maybe there was some truth in that—that lie."

"When a young fellow is busy, he hasn't got time to brag about what he is doing," stated the cap'n. "The Snell boy done all his bragging the first six months he was up in the city. For the

year and a half since then he has been sawing wood."

But even Cap'n Sproul was not just sure as to how the young man was prospering. He was reticent in his letters. He merely assured his parents that he was busy, and was all right.

All at once some one came out of the shadows and stood before the two cronies who smoked on the porch.

It was the Snell boy.

"Captain Sproul and Corporal Squair," he said, "I left you here two years ago with a promise. I just came into town—I haven't even been home yet. I came here first because you promised me that you'd help me in a matter if I made good. I hoped I'd find you here. Captain Sproul, will you scratch a match and look at this?"

He handed a bank book to the cap'n, and the cap'n examined it.

"One thousand dollars saved," Cap'n Sproul advised the corporal.

"Besides that I have the rent of four rooms, furnished," stated young Snell. "I have a job with an electric-power company that pays me fifteen hundred dollars a year, with a prospect of a raise in July. As to my ability to save, I'll say that I've lived on six dollars a week since I got my position. I have here a letter from my employers, testifying to my industry and faithfulness."

"Snell boy," cried the cap'n, "I must say that you have learned how to talk business without slapping on trimmings. Step up here and let us shake you by the hand."

When he came to them, they saw that he was no longer the youth they had known. He was erect, his head was poised with confidence, he was the sort of young man who had won and was modestly proud of it.

"I have sent word to Annie through my folks," he said. "I have told her I was coming. She has sent word to me that she is ready to be my wife. I have my license. But her father is still against me. She is afraid of him. He swears I shall not have her. We don't want to run away as if our marriage was a shameful thing. We don't want the smirch on us of being elopers. A



And because he bawled for help so lustily, they gagged him with the bail of a wooden pail.

marriage when folks have loved and waited ought to be a happy time. I want my dad and ma to see us married. You promised to help me. Will you go to Batson Reeves, Captain Sproul and Corporal Squair, and bring him around to reason?"

The two who were thus appealed to looked at each other.

"Young Snell," said the cap'n, "in ordinary families a father has the say as to how his daughter shall marry off—or, at least, he can sort of hint to her. But this matter has been argued here before the full bench, and it has been unanimously decided that he shan't be allowed to spoil the lives of two good women—one was enough. I've been looking forward, sonny, to the time when you'd come back here and claim the help that we promised. I've had plenty of time to do up some thinking on the subject. You go get the minister, invite what folks you want at your house, and get married to-night. Where is Annie?"

"She will run over to my house when my mother signals. But if she stays more than a few minutes, Reeves al-

ways comes after her. We can't have any wedding unless he is taken care of."

"He will be taken care of," stated the cap'n grimly.

"How?" asked Snell, with young man's curiosity.

"Bub, you've got a wedding on your hands and on your mind for this evening—and wedding plans hadn't ought to be smutched up with a lot of messy stuff such as any doings where Bat Reeves is concerned. You run along and be happy—it's the one night when a young chap has every right to be happy. The wedding won't be interrupted."

The tone carried conviction. And when a loved and lovely bride is waiting for an impetuous young man, the young man is not overinclined to bother with details of plans that others have taken on themselves.

"Corporal Squair," said the cap'n, after their protégé had hurried away, "I have been reserving these plans, not wanting to burden up your mind with anything that was not needed till the time came. Will you please pin your constable's badge in a prominent place

on the outside of your coat, and listen to me?"

While the cap'n was deep in his explanation, Uncle Jordan came through the bridge on his way to the store on a belated errand.

"We need a good able liar who can jump in quick," stated the cap'n in an undertone. "He can lie, and he hates Bat Reeves just as bad as we do. Uncle Jordan," he called, "we need your help in a little matter, and there ain't any time to explain just now. All is, it's a case where we want to put something over on that cussed Bat Reeves."

"Needn't bother to explain if it's him you're after," squeaked Uncle Jordan. "What'll I do?"

"Go up and stand by his front gate till his girl comes out, and then run in and tell him that just as you came across the bridge you saw Will Snell waiting there, and that you met his girl running down here."

"I can add to it just a little," stated Uncle Jordan, with quick and judicious perception where any mischief was concerned. "I'll say there is a hoss and rubber-tired buggy hitched acrost the river."

"That will help," the cap'n called after him.

Fifteen minutes later, they heard the "flamp" of running feet. The two who were waiting on the porch stepped down and stood in the road.

It was Batson Reeves who came. The starlight glinted on the corporal's badge when he raised his arm.

"Halt! Pay toll!"

"To the devil with your toll! Get out of my way!" gasped Reeves, plunging past.

"That makes him defying, Cap'n Sproul!" shouted the corporal, clutching the runner and tripping him. "I call you in as a posse."

It was somewhat of a Homeric battle there in the highway, even though they

were two to one. Reeves was frantic with suspicion and rage. He fought like a demon. He writhed and swore and kicked and struck out with his hard little fists.

But the cap'n and the corporal stuck to him doggedly. They dragged him into the tollhouse, they threw him on the floor, and sat on him until the corporal managed to get his wrists into a pair of rusty old handcuffs that had never been employed before in history.

Then they tied him into a chair in the back room, and because he bawled for help so lustily, they gagged him with the bail of a wooden pail.

"Now, see here, Reeves," said Corporal Squair, after he had somewhat recovered his breath, "you have tried to run toll, and you gloried in doing it. You defied and assaulted a constable—that's me—when I was arresting you. All them charges will be preferred as soon as I can get up to Squire Bragg's office. You've got to stay here till the law can take its course. You're a desperate character."

For the first time in his occupancy of the position, Corporal Squair left the tollgate unattended. He locked the door of his house behind him. As a director in the bridge corporation, Cap'n Sproul gave him full permission to do this.

"There ain't much passing at this time of the evening, anyway," stated the director, "and it ain't every day we can get a chance to tend out on a wedding that we have gunned through in pardnership. We'll stop in at the wedding—and take our time about lugging him before the squire."

"I'm afraid I've got a black eye out of the fracas," confided Corporal Squair, as he plodded up the hill. "I ain't goin' to be a very pretty sight at a weddin'."

"Oh, scat!" snapped the cap'n. "When they know what we've done for 'em, we'll look handsomer 'n angels to the crowd that'll be at that wedding."



Digestion, the Liver, and the Skin

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

THE intimate relation of the digestive tube—which is really an inner lining—to the outer covering of the body is well known. A notable historic instance is that of Napoleon the First, who, while suffering from a periodic attack of itch following indigestion, kicked one of his generals, and almost laid hands on an ambassador during a savage outburst of temper. The part played by Napoleon's skin troubles in his career forms quite interesting reading in medical literature; the man falls very low in the human scale in the light of his rashness in eating, and his subsequent rashes, to say nothing of his intolerably rash speech and conduct. His skin troubles made him extremely irritable at times, and following a meal of highly seasoned and indigestible food, his temper was more than uncertain. It is a historic fact that Napoleon lost the battle of Leipzig because he ate not wisely, but too well of mutton stuffed with onions. While he held all Europe in the hollow of his hand, he himself was a victim to an insupportable itch directly traceable to indiscretions in diet. Were he living to-day, he would undoubtedly possess sounder views on the subject of dietetics, and everything pertaining thereto.

In former years a gentleman was not keeping up his reputation unless he made an unpleasant exhibition of him-

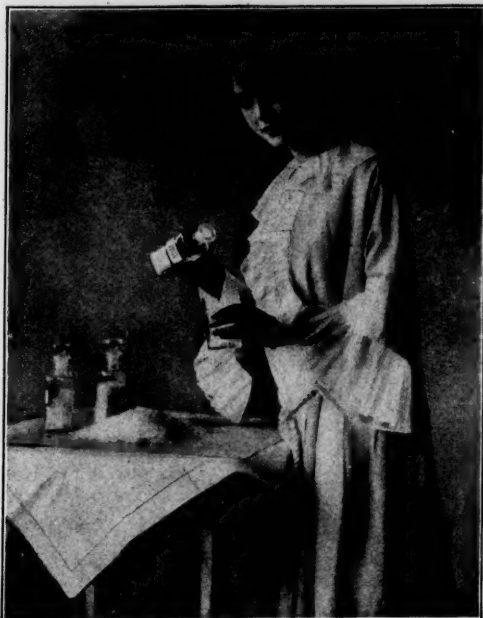
self in eating and drinking; to-day the tables are literally and figuratively turned, and the gentleman at the table becomes as the peasant in the field in his extreme simplicity and abstemiousness. The late King Edward set a notable example in this respect and broke away from the old health-destroying, gormandizing traditions by limiting the courses of his dinners to five, and the time spent in consuming the same to one hour.

The processes of digestion are highly complicated, and although a tremendous amount of work has been done in clearing up a field practically unexplored until recent years, much is still very obscure. One thing is certain, however—we have all been in the habit of eating too much and too rapidly. Were it not for the marvelous tolerance of Nature and her extraordinary willingness to help us over tight places, we would succumb in greater numbers than we do to digestive ills and skin troubles. The blood is, of course, the most important tissue in the body, and the blood is made and renovated by the food we eat, and the air we breathe. The blood in turn nourishes the body. In order that foods may be converted into this life-sustaining fluid, the organs that perform the work of digestion and assimilation must be in good condition.

During the past few years the atten-

tion of the entire civilized world has been directed to dietetics because of the theories advanced by Horace Fletcher in support of masticating and salivating the food so thoroughly in the mouth that no necessity will remain for a digestive tract except to imbibe the liquified food. Then Professor Metchnikoff startled the world by asserting that we had no need of the lower intestine, that it did more harm than good, and should be extirpated in every possible case! Of course both theorists had swarms of enthusiastic followers during the early promulgation of their ideas; now that those ideas have gone through the refining influence of experimentation at the hands of trained dieticians, it is found that they are both extreme, naturally, but that both hold truths of great importance.

The first act of digestion takes place in the mouth; and unless the teeth are sound and the food is thoroughly masticated, the stomach is tremendously hampered in its churning process. The stomach is really a churn, and it prepares the food for the more valuable work performed by the two great glands of digestion, the liver and the pancreas. Now Fletcher's ideas have done a vast amount of good, because, first, by thorough mastication—chewing—the food is not only ground and minced finely for the stomach to handle, but it is, secondly, completely insalivated—mixed with saliva—which converts certain starches into certain sugars. Thirdly the process consumes so much time that all desire to bolt food and to gormandize vanishes under the restraint imposed by this method of literally eating by the clock; and fourthly, there is no question but that holding liquids in the mouth and practicing Fletcher's teachings to the ut-



Beautifying mineral waters can be made at home.

most tremendously stimulates the gustatory nerves, and results in a keener appreciation of flavors and aromas. Then, too, a certain amount of absorption possibly takes place through the surrounding tissues. It must be said for Fletcher that his ideas have accomplished a vast amount of good with those suffering from chronic indigestion and intestinal troubles, and a horde of other functional derangements caused by clogging up the system with an excess of stuff that it can neither digest nor get rid off.

Now in this respect Metchnikoff has also done a great deal of good, although he has undoubtedly become obsessed with his theories and ideas, and is no longer given the respectful attention that his exalted attainments should rightfully confer upon him. Some day, perhaps, in the course of evolution, we may come to his way of thinking, but just now we feel rather better off with

our large intestinal tracts *in situ*, and living on the many and varied savors and gustatory delights nature has so abundantly provided. A diet composed largely of sour milk may do very well for the savant who has practically given up the hurry and rush of the outside world, and who lives in his laboratory with his mind absorbed in high thoughts, while we who are grubbing along with mundane affairs require pretty thorough feeding in order to keep up our endless activities.

Between the teachings of Fletcher and the scientific theories of Metchnikoff, there is a happy medium, and that is to eat when hungry of such foods as appeal to one's palate, which is always a pretty good guide, to chew one's food sufficiently—Gladstone made it a rule to give all meat thirty-two chews before swallowing—and not to gluttonize. When a man rises from the table, and feels that he must unfasten the lower button of his waistcoat, he—well, he has eaten not wisely, but too well.

By the lay mind the importance of the liver as an organ of digestion and assimilation is very little understood or appreciated, and as for the pancreas, few know of its existence, much less that the pancreatic fluid is essential to life. However, that is not to be wondered at, since the pancreas has been, and still is, an organ of mystery. The function of the liver is exceedingly complex. It is a storage house for a good deal of nourishment not immediately taken up by the system; it alters much of the pigment matter that enters the body, and changes it into material that is required by the system; it takes up noxious and poisonous substances, and acts upon them with antitoxic effect, rendering them inert when possible. In short, it acts as a chemical furnace, or as an alembic, transforming and transmuting metals and poisons into substances that can be handled or eliminated. Since it has been proven that we can live without a stomach, but cannot exist without a liver, the enormous importance of this wonderful gland becomes apparent. Of course if it is overworked, and unable to dispose

of all the toxic substances passed into it, much of this material is thrown in its unaltered state into the blood; furthermore another and equally important function of the liver, that of manufacturing bile, is also interfered with, with decidedly deleterious effects upon digestion and the body economy.

The hygiene of the liver should occupy more of our attention than it does, not only from the point of view of health, but from that of beauty also. For when this important gland is out of order, it is very sure to show its condition in the color and texture of the skin, in the various blemishes commonly called liver spots, in blotches, discolorations, sallowness, even jaundiced—yellowish—eyes, and in countless other graver disorders. Indeed, when this organ is not performing its manifold functions, there is more or less trouble going on throughout the whole system; not only the digestion, but the whole intestinal tract suffers, too.

The very best treatment for an inactive liver is a purging, and it is mainly on account of their action in this respect that certain alkaline mineral waters have attained so great a fame; in addition to increased activity of the intestines, the circulation of the bile is enhanced by their use. Owing to the efficacy of the treatment at Carlsbad, the salt obtained from the waters there has been in favor for countless years; this salt can be artificially prepared as follows:

Potassium sulphate	1 part
Sodium chloride	9 parts
Sodium bicarbonate	18 parts
Dried sodium sulphate	22 parts
Mix and keep in closed glass bottles.	

A heaping teaspoonful of this should be taken in a glass of hot water on an empty stomach, usually a half hour before the morning and the evening meal, and more frequently if possible; or the amount of salt may be lessened.

Any well-known mineral water, such as Vichy or Kissengen, taken copiously during the day to the exclusion of any other drink, will act with splendid benefit upon the liver and the in-

testinal tract. The idea is to flush the entire alimentary system with a daily alkaline bath, but this must not be kept up indefinitely, but repeated every few days, or pursued in moderation. Certain drugs or combinations of vegetable matter that have a direct action upon the liver are also extremely beneficial when such an action is called for. The name of a well-known hepatic stimulant and intestinal tonic will be furnished any one upon application.

In cases of torpor of the liver, the diet should be regulated, and a large quantity of fruit and greens eaten, with less heavy food. Physicians are constantly preaching to parents the necessity of giving more fruit and a greater variety of it to children. Of fruits, apples head the list. In place of candy, a bright, sweet-smelling apple will not only please the eye, but the nerves of smell and taste as well, while the juices are invaluable. Apples should be eaten raw after a thorough washing. They contain potash, soda, magnesia, and phosphorus. The natural acid is invaluable for the gums, teeth, stomach, and intestines, being of a germicidal character; in rheumatism, and so-called growing pains, it has been very helpful. Grapes also rank high in their antiseptic and disinfecting action upon the intestines.

The properties of fruit juices are too well known to need repeating here, yet these simple measure are not appreciated because they are so easy to obtain. Take the juice of the lemon, for instance. Its action on the stomach and the liver is remarkable; while externally as a bleach for liver discolorations, it is unrivaled. The juice and fleshy parts of cherries—avoid the skins—contain manganese, the salts of potash, lime, iron, and more phos-

phoric acid than any other fruit. In warm climates where pineapples can be procured in their deliciously ripe, juicy state, they form a valuable adjunct to the treatment of many diseases of the entire alimentary tract because of their peptogenic and digestive properties; the juice of the pineapple, as well as of the lemon and the orange, is also germicidal and antiseptic.



An apple a day drives the doctor away!

Lack of exercise, especially in the fresh air, is frequently the cause of indigestion and liver torpidity with consequent sallowness and more serious skin troubles. The lungs, in pumping fresh air into the system and stale air out, act like bellows in burning up the fuel upon which the body is fed. Walking, with the avowed purpose of inhaling deep drafts of fresh air, should form part of each day's régime. Purposeful breathing also gives all the abdominal organs the best kind of mas-

sage. Horseback riding is especially beneficial on account of the motion or jolting it causes; riding astride is now advocated for hygienic and health reasons. In a sanitarium in Germany—where all manner of out-of-door health treatments are indulged in without eliciting the ridicule such procedures would call forth elsewhere—patients stride wooden hobby horses and gallop around the lawns and shady glens. It goes without saying that such forms of treatment are delightfully rejuvenating; age, care, illness, real and fancied, silently steal away in an atmosphere so magically youth inspiring.

Germany is the home of more health fads of a fantastic nature than any other country, and one of the more recent is walking on all fours for digestive troubles of one kind or another. The treatment has taken hold of the public seriously as its rationale has become more apparent. Although it is many ages since man assumed the upright posture, there is no doubt that our ancestors walked on all fours; this position gives the stomach greater freedom; it unpacks the liver and gall sac, and allows a freer interchange of all the digestive juices. It does a good many other things, too, and is especially recommended for obesity and such conditions as give rise to an accumulation of fat and waste products. One has only to remember that animals, although gluttonous, are rarely troubled with indigestion and never grow obese until they become old and useless, to see that this fad has much to recommend it.

One must not forget that soured milk and buttermilk constitute admirable foods for functional disturbances of the liver, and more especially for that variety of indigestion known as fermentative, which occurs usually in the intestines. These altered milks are also wonderfully effective bleaches for the skin, and when used externally as

well as internally, soon bring about a most gratifying improvement. For the blemishes and discolorations that so frequently accompany sluggishness of the alimentary tract, a camphor cream previously mentioned in this department is much sought after. The formula will be sent on application. This cream will not be of permanent service unless the system is also treated. Pimples, blackheads, and the like are rarely due to local causes only; they, like more extensive discolorations, require dieting, daily baths, open-air exercise, and intestinal stimulation.

Liver spots and the like will yield to local measures very readily when the cause that gives rise to them is also treated. A mild local bleach contains:

Salicylic acid	60 grains
Bay rum	4 ounces

Apply night and morning with absorbent cotton, and allow it to dry on. After a few days, if the skin becomes painful, discontinue and apply oxide of zinc ointment; repeat the treatment if necessary.

Another and stronger cream for the treatment of brown and liver spots will gladly be furnished on proper application.

Electrolysis is a painless and rapidly effective method of removing those accumulations of pigment upon the skin commonly called "moles." It is not advisable to attempt the management of these blemishes except under the guidance of a physician, because any "raised" disfigurement upon the skin is very apt to become the seat of inflammation that may develop seriously unless it is handled by an expert. Moles are never "beauty" spots, contrary to popular fancy. A mole is a blemish that may at any time become irritated from one cause or another and begin to enlarge; the moment it does this, it should be removed at once.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

DEEP BREATHING

By D. O. Harrell, M.D.

I BELIEVE we must all admit that deep breathing is a very desirable practice. Furthermore, we know it to be a fact that not one person in twenty, or perhaps one person in a hundred, really breathes deeply. Every physician can verify the statement that we are daily called upon to prescribe drugs for ailments that owe their cause directly to insufficient and improper breathing—Oxygen Starvation.

Breathing is the Vital Force of Life. Every muscle, nerve cell, in fact every fibre of our body, is directly dependent upon the air we breathe. Health, Strength and Endurance are impossible without well-oxygenated blood. The food we eat must combine with abundant oxygen before it can become of any value to the body. Breathing is to the body what free draught is to the steam boiler. Shut off the draught, and you will kill your fire, no matter how excellent coal you use. Similarly, if you breathe shallowly, you must become anæmic, weak and thin, no matter how carefully you may select your diet.

I might continue indefinitely to cite examples of the great physiological value of deep breathing. For instance, it is a well-known fact that worry, fear, and intense mental concentration practically paralyze the breathing muscles. This depressing condition can be entirely overcome through conscious deep breathing.

The main benefit of physical exercise lies in the activity it gives the lungs. What we term "lack of healthful exercise" in reality means insufficient lung action. Exercise that does not compel vigorous deep-breathing is of little real value. Unfortunately, few persons have the strength and endurance to exercise violently enough to stir the lungs into rapid action. This is especially true of women and also of men who have permitted their muscles to become weak. Common sense, therefore, dictates that the lungs should be exercised independently through deep breathing gymnastics.

Unfortunately, few persons have the slightest conception of what is really meant by deep breathing. In fact, few physicians thoroughly understand the act. Ask a dozen different physical instructors to define deep breathing, and you will receive a dozen different answers. One tells you it means the full expansion of the chest, another tells you it means abdominal breathing, the third declares it means diaphragmatic breathing, and so on.

Recently there has been brought to my notice a brochure on this important subject of respiration, that to my knowledge for the first time really treats the subject in a thoroughly scientific and practical manner. I refer to the booklet entitled "Deep Breathing," by Paul von Boeckmann, R.S. In this treatise, the author describes proper breathing, so that even the most uninformed layman can get a correct idea of the act. The booklet contains a mass of common sense teachings on the subject of Deep Breathing, and "Internal Exercise." The author has had the courage to think for himself, and to expose the weaknesses in our modern systems of physical culture.

I believe this booklet gives us the real key to constitutional strength. It shows us plainly the danger of excessive exercise, that is, the danger of developing the external body at the expense of the internal body. The author's arguments are so logical it is self-evident that his theories must be based upon vast experience. Personally, I know that his teachings are most profoundly scientific and thoroughly practical, for I have had occasion to see them tested with a number of my patients.

The booklet to which I refer can be obtained upon payment of ten cents in coin or stamps by addressing Dr. von Boeckmann directly at 2080 Tower Bldg., 110 W. 40th St., New York. The simple exercises he describes therein are in themselves well worth ten times the small price demanded.

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Civil Service
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Stenography & Typewriting
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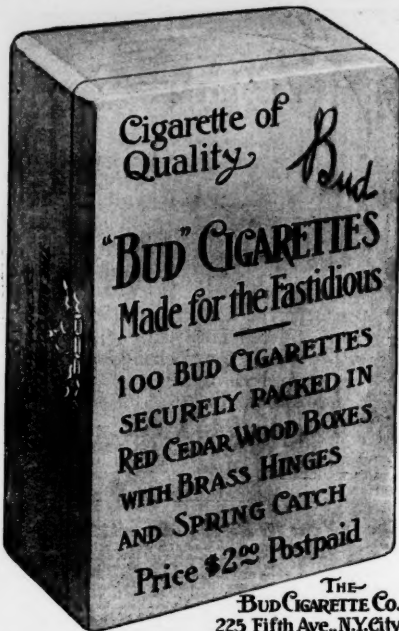
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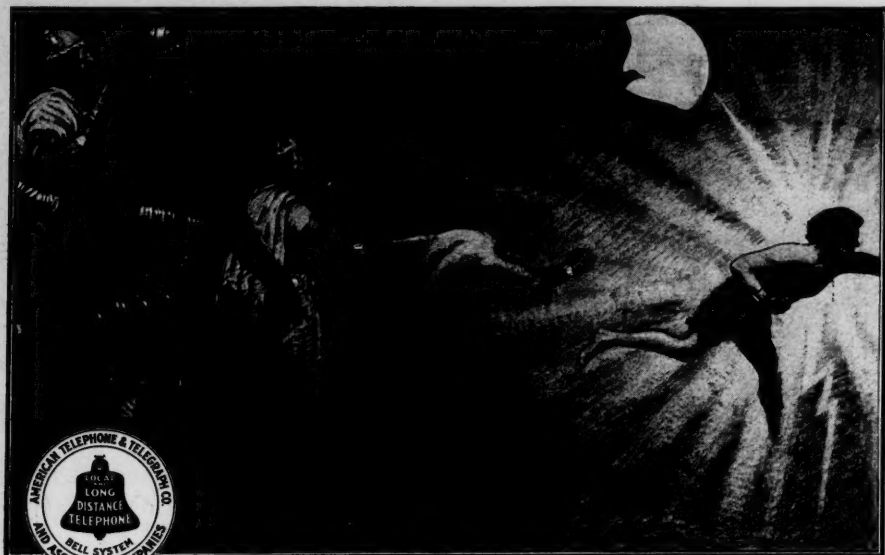
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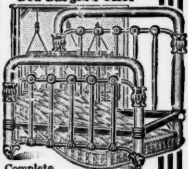
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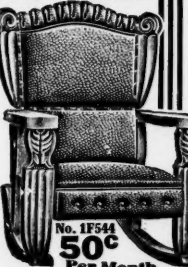
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